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A Jewish Agricultural Colony in Argentina

by Morton D. Winsberg

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SOCIAL SCIENCES
No. 19, Summer 1963

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INTRODUCTION

As a result of centuries of migrations, persecutions, economic uncertainties, and government restrictions, the modern history of the Jews has not generally been associated with agriculture. This is particularly true of the *Ashkenazim*, or northern European Jews, who for centuries have sought their livelihood in the cities and villages. Even with their dispersal throughout the world as a result of rising anti-Semitism in northern Europe during the past hundred years, the majority congregated in the cities of their adopted countries.

During the period of Jewish mass migration from Europe, more than 175,000 of the millions that left chose to emigrate to Argentina. Today the Jewish community in that nation is the fifth largest in the world, surpassed only by the number of Jews in the United States, the Soviet Union, Israel, and France. Those Jews who arrived in Argentina differed little from their brethren who went elsewhere. Upon arrival they generally chose the occupations which typify the Jews of most nations: shopkeeping, small-scale consumer-goods manufacturing, and, more recently, professions such as medicine and law. However, the Argentine migration differed from migrations to other nations in that considerable effort was made by a Jewish charitable organization to colonize Jews in agricultural colonies throughout the nation. This attempt actually had an initial success, and as late as 1922 over 20 per cent of Argentine Jews were living within these colonies, though by today the percentage has fallen to less than 3.

One attempt at Jewish agricultural colonization was the creation of Colonia Barón Hirsch. An examination of its foundation, development, and present-day economic and cultural situation affords one an excellent opportunity to view immigration acculturation in an alien physical and social environment. Here is a case of a migration from one hemisphere to another, from an area of primarily urban Slavic culture to one of intensely rural Spanish culture. Examples similar to this have not been uncommon in the New World among other groups. Argentina alone has accommodated many aliens in its rural districts. However, Argentina was the only Western Hemisphere nation where an appreciable number of Jews settled onto the land.

The author wishes to offer warm thanks to the following people, whose assistance was of great value: Professors Raymond E. Crist and T. Lynn Smith of the University of Florida for doing so much to stimulate the present author's interest in Latin America while a graduate student and for their continued interest in his career since graduation; Mr. Ilja Dijour of the United Hebrew Sheltering and Immigration Aid Society office in New York for the valuable letters of introduction to important members of the Buenos Aires Jewish community; Gran Rabino Guillermo Schlesinger of the Congregación Israelita de la República Argentina and his wife, who generously took the time to help the author orient himself in new surroundings; Sr. Bernardo Fleischer of the Sociedad para la Protección de Inmigrantes Israelitas of Buenos Aires, who, as a true friend, not only helped the author while he was in Argentina but also has continued to be of valuable assistance; Señores Jack Calius, Elias Saltiel, and Manuel Tilken of the Jewish Colonization Association office in Buenos Aires, who permitted the author use of the Association archives; Señores Heinz Eldodt and Rafael Levaton of Colonia Barón Hirsch, who patiently submitted to the many questions raised by the author while doing his field work; and the many other people who contributed their time. The field study was made possible with financial support from the Social Science Research Council.

MORTON D. WINSBERG

Ohio University
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1. THE BACKGROUND TO SETTLEMENT

A discussion of Colonia Barón Hirsch and its inhabitants would be incomplete without a brief examination of the conditions in which the Jews of Russia and Poland lived during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The preponderance of the colonists who migrated to Argentina came from these two countries, both dominated at the time by the Russian Czars.

During this period, those Jews under the jurisdiction of the Czars had little hope for an eventual solution of their desperate economic, social, and cultural plight. Except for a brief time during the early period of the reign of Czar Alexander II, ruler of Russia from 1855 to 1881, their lives were increasingly circumscribed by royal proclamations. More vicious than these proclamations were the pogroms. The Czarist government permitted the Gentile population to turn upon the Jews with impunity, causing large loss of Jewish property and frequent loss of Jewish lives.

The uncertainty of the future of world Jewry was compounded by the fact that the majority of the Jewish population lived under the jurisdiction of the Czars. Though only estimates can be made, the Jewish population of Russia and her empire was in excess of 5 million in 1890. Most of these Jews did not live under Czarist domination by choice but because their ancestors had gradually been driven eastward after being expelled from western European countries during previous centuries.

The majority of Jews of nineteenth-century Russia were artisans or members of the petty bourgeoisie, living in the nation's villages and cities. The years of forced migration from one nation to another had inhibited many European Jews from investing in something so immobile as land. Those Russian Jews who did seek to purchase property were often frustrated by Czarist laws forbidding the ownership of land by Jews.

This is not to imply that during the nineteenth century the Jews of Russia were exclusively urban residents. As early as 1779 there were isolated attempts by the Russian government to relocate some on farms within the eastern provinces, Astrakhan, and other parts of what was then regarded as "New Russia." In 1804 Alexander I facilitated Jewish agricultural colonization in Kherson, and gradually other Jewish colonies were created in localities as far east as Tobolsk and Omsk, in Siberia. However, the Czar's interest in the resettlement of the Jews on the land was not humanitarian, but, to quote directly from a ukase of the time "to check the selfish interests of the Jews."[1] By 1870 there were 34,475 Jews within these colonies, and by 1896 the number of settlements had risen to 265 with 96,930 inhabitants.[2] Unfortunately, many of these farming communities were located in such inaccessible and primitive areas of the nation and were so poorly administered by government overseers that few were economically successful.

Upon the assassination of Alexander II by a terrorist group in 1881, a wave of political unrest swept Russia. Though there were Jews implicated in the assassination, the majority of Russian Jews were apolitical at that time. However, the Russian nobility encouraged the new Czar, Alexander III, to accuse the Jews of killing Alexander II, despite their innocence. In addition, though the nobility was largely responsible for the nation's economic plight, the Czarist government encouraged the belief that the blame rested with the Jews. Aroused by these irresponsible and untrue accusations, the Russian masses turned against the Jews, looting many Jewish communities and assaulting Jewish citizens. Foreign indignation over these brutalities was almost immediate. Official protest was lodged by the United States government, and a protest was introduced, though never passed, by members of the British House of Commons.

Pogroms and other manifestations of anti-Semitism throughout Russia in that catastrophic year reached such dimensions that the Czar was finally compelled to issue the "Temporary Rules of May 3rd, 1882." To quote directly from the edict, "These laws are called into being by the efforts of the government to improve the relations between the Jews and the native population in the Pale of Settlement,[3] and to protect the former from the hostility of the latter, which has manifested itself in outbursts against the person and property of the Jews; also to lessen the economic dependency of the native population upon the Jews."[4]

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[1] "Agriculture," *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1st ed., I, 252.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] The Pale of Settlement, first established in 1791 by Catherine II, limited Jewish settlement to a long and narrow crescent from southern Latvia through White Russia, partitioned Poland, and terminated in the western Ukraine. Only with special permission could Jews live in most of what was then regarded as "Great Russia." After the Temporary Rules of May 3rd, 1882 they were even forbidden to live in rural areas within the Pale.

The provisions of the edict seemed, on outward appearance, to be sincere in attempting to lessen the sufferings of the Jews. Instead, through the literal interpretation of each clause, it was to mean that from 1882 until the close of the Czarist regime in 1917, hundreds of thousands of Jews were to be expelled forcibly from broad sections outside the Pale, to which they had gradually emerged during the more liberal reign of Alexander II, and were driven back within it. Furthermore, because of the ignorance and prejudice of local government officials, many Jews who lived within the Pale at the time of the edict had to abandon their homes and move to other communities within the Pale.

These Temporary Rules of May 3rd, 1882 were to act as the catalyst among the Jews of Russia to start them on a mass migration from that country to other nations where they could find freedom from the rigid laws and prejudices which circumscribed practically every aspect of their lives at the time. The stage had been set for what was to become one of the largest mass migrations of any people in the history of the world.

Historically, the religious Jew has always thought himself temporarily exiled from his ancestral home, Israel. It was logical, then, that a large segment of the population, particularly the more religious, should express more interest in migration to Israel than elsewhere. Despite the desperate poverty and unstable conditions of Palestine at this time, a number of Russian Jews did go there, and the flow was augmented appreciably once the concepts of Theodor Herzl, founder of the Zionist movement, had an impact upon them. Nevertheless, the majority of the Jews who migrated opted for economic and cultural freedom and chose the Western Hemisphere.

The magnitude of this exodus to the Western Hemisphere can be appreciated by the following figures. It has been estimated that 30,000 Jews migrated to the United States from Russia between 1869 and 1880, but in one four-month period, from May to August, 1891, 35,000 Jews left Russia from the Brody border crossing alone.[5] In the last decade of the nineteenth century almost 1 million Jews reached the New World, the majority from Russia and Poland.

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4. "Pale of Settlement," *Jewish Encyclopedia,* 1st ed., IX, 468.
5. Mark Wischnitzer, *To Dwell in Safety* (Philadelphia, 1948), p. 75.

Between 1901 and 1925 an additional 2 million migrated, mainly from Poland, the Balkan countries, and Russia. From 1925 to 1939, 338,000 more came, mainly from Germany and Austria. After World War II a small number of survivors of German concentration camps arrived.[6]

The majority of the immigrants who reached the Western Hemisphere settled in the United States or Canada. Latin America held little attraction for them, with the exception of Argentina, which for much of the period of migration opened its doors to immigrants of all nationalities; 4 per cent of the Jews who arrived in the New World settled in this country.[7]

It was during the height of the mass migration of Jews from eastern Europe that Baron Maurice de Hirsch saw the need to assist this horde of migrants in leaving Europe and settling in their adopted countries. Hirsch, a Bavarian by birth, was one of the wealthiest Jews of his day. As a banker he had greatly increased the size of an already large family fortune through investments in Turkish, Russian, and Austrian railroads. Imbued with a great sense of social responsibility toward his less fortunate coreligionists, Hirsch sought to use his wealth to encourage European Jewish migration to selected countries in the Western Hemisphere, where he felt Jews would have a good economic, social, and cultural future.

Though he lent support to many existing Jewish charities and created many himself, his most ambitious effort was the Jewish Colonization Association, colloquially known as the ICA or the JCA. He created this charity in 1891 with an initial capitalization of 2 million pounds sterling, subsequently increased to 8 million.[8]

The JCA was to be an instrument for what Hirsch felt would be the moral and physical regeneration of Russian Jewry. He stated his views thus:

> What I desire to accomplish, what, after many failures has come to be the object of my life, and that for which I am ready to stake my wealth and my intellectual powers, is to give to a portion of my companions in faith the possibility of finding a new existence, primarily

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[6] *Ibid.*, p. 295.

[7] Simon Weil, *Población Israelita en la República Argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1936), p. 6.

[8] Samuel Joseph, *History of the Baron de Hirsch Fund* (Philadelphia, 1935), p. 73.

as farmers and also as handicraftsmen, in those lands where the laws and religious tolerance permit them to carry on the struggle for existence as noble and responsible subjects of a human government.[9]

The purchase of land began immediately in Canada, the United States, Brazil, and Argentina. Particular emphasis was given to the purchase of land in Argentina, since Hirsch felt that because of Argentina's sparse population and freedom from racial and religious prejudices it would make a suitable haven for the Jews. Also, since Argentina was suffering through a periodic economic crisis, land could be purchased at extremely cheap prices in 1891.

The initial Argentine land purchase was made in the province of Santa Fé in 1891. Here Hirsch settled those who remained of a group of 136 Jewish families who in 1889 made an independent migration from Russia to seek farm land in Argentina. After rejecting an Argentine government offer of land in the remote and inaccessible Chaco, many established themselves in the city of Buenos Aires. However, a large number persisted in the desire to farm and accepted an offer made by Pedro Palacios, a wealthy Santa Fé landowner, who agreed to sell them land and help them establish themselves. However, when the families had arrived on the Palacios property the owner was either unable or unwilling to meet his promises. In 1890, when Hirsch first learned of these families, they were encamped along the railroad embankment adjacent to the Palacios ranch, subsisting on handouts from people in the neighborhood and passengers on the trains. A large number of their children died during the infamous winter of 1890, either from starvation, exposure, or disease.[10]

Through his agents Hirsch purchased land from Palacios and created the colony of Moisesville in 1891. Eventually the size of this colony was augmented by further purchases until it came to be the biggest colony under the jurisdiction of the Jewish Colonization Association, 292,226 acres. Other land purchases quickly followed, and eventually five colonies were developed in the province of Entre Ríos, an additional colony was established north of Moisesville in Sante Fé, two were located in Buenos Aires, and one each in the

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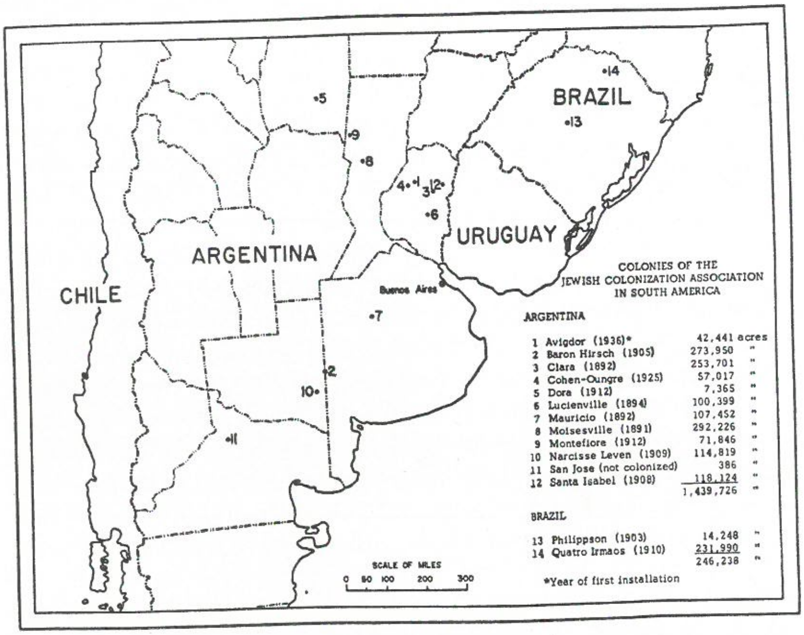
[9] Baron de Hirsch, "My Views on Philanthropy," *North American Review,* 416 (July, 1891), 2.

[10] José Mendelson, "Genesis de la Colonia Judía en la Argentina," in *50 Años de Colonización Judía en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1939), p. 116.

Chaco, La Pampa, and Río Negro (Map 1). Today the total area of land in Jewish Colonization Association colonies in Argentina exceeds 1.4 million acres.

Hirsch's desire to divert the flow of immigrants to the west instead of to Palestine incurred the ire of Herzl, who, along with other Zionists, regarded the plan as an enormous waste of money which could have been put to use in the re-establishment of the Jewish state.

MAP 1


BRAZIL
URUGUAY
ARGENTINA
CHILE
Buenos Aires
COLONIES OF THE JEWISH COLONIZATION ASSOCIATION IN SOUTH AMERICA
ARGENTINA
1 Avigdor (1936)* 42,441 acres
2 Baron Hirsch (1905) 273,950 "
3 Clara (1892) 253,701 "
4 Cohen-Oungre (1925) 57,017 "
5 Dora (1912) 7,365 "
6 Lucienville (1894) 100,399 "
7 Mauricio (1892) 107,452 "
8 Moisesville (1891) 292,226 "
9 Montefiore (1912) 71,846 "
10 Narcisse Leven (1909) 114,819 "
11 San Jose (not colonized) 386 "
12 Santa Isabel (1908) 118,124 "
1,439,726 "
BRAZIL
13 Philippson (1903) 14,248 "
14 Quatro Irmaos (1910) 231,990 "
246,238 "
*Year of first installation
SCALE OF MILES
0 50 100 200 300

Nevertheless, it caught the imagination of the beleaguered Russian Jews, and the name of Maurice de Hirsch came to be revered by many who thought him to be their means of salvation.

Hirsch's plan to remove the Jews from Russia met great favor among Czarist officials. In 1888 Hirsch had offered 50 million French francs to the Czarist government to improve the conditions of the Russian Jews through the establishment of trade and agricultural schools. This gift was rejected because the government refused to accept money when the donor specified how it was to be spent. However, this new plan of Hirsch's envisioned the eventual removal of all the Jews from Russia, which the government wanted.

An agreement was reached between Hirsch and the Russians by which Hirsch would assume responsibility for transporting the Jews from Russia while the government would furnish their passports, which hitherto had been denied them. The government also specified that no Jew who left the country could return except by special permission.

The plan was to resettle 25,000 the first year (1892) with the number of departures increasing gradually each year until, at the end of 25 years, 3,250,000 Jews would have left the country.[11] That such an ambitious plan was doomed to failure was evident in the numbers who were to leave Russia yearly. In the first year alone the JCA was able to resettle only 2,500, although the quota was the afore-mentioned 25,000. In no year has Jewish immigration into Argentina exceeded 15,000, yet Argentina was to be the major destination of colonists under the JCA program. Nevertheless, despite the discrepancy between the planned number of removals per year from Russia and the number that actually reached Argentina, Hirsch's charity was successful. His efforts lessened the fears of the timorous who, even though they were never directly affected by any Hirsch charity, might without knowledge of it never have had the courage to leave Europe to accept the unfamiliar conditions in the New World.

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11. Simon M. Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland* (Philadelphia, 1918), II, 419.

2. THE PERIOD OF COLONIZATION (1905-45)

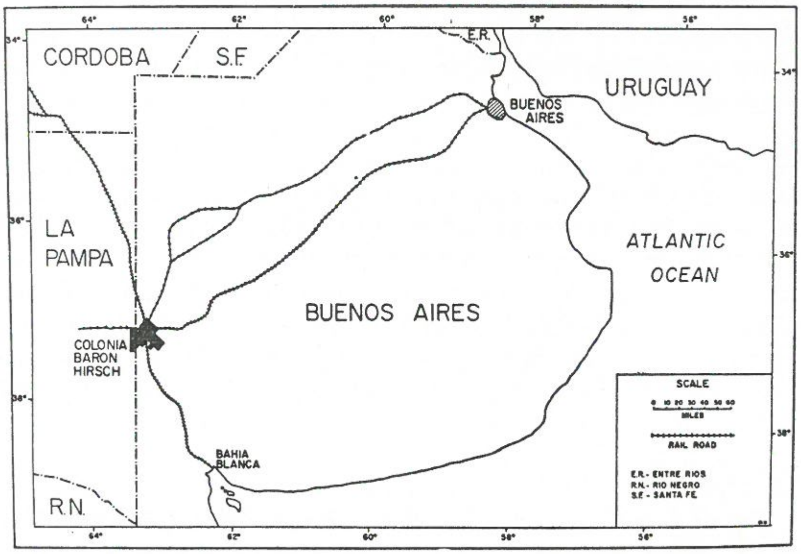
Colonia Barón Hirsch is located on the boundary between the provinces of Buenos Aires and La Pampa, in the *partido* of Adolfo Alsina. Situated 325 miles southwest of the city of Buenos Aires, and approximately 100 miles northwest of the city of Bahia Blanca, it lies on the undulating, almost treeless western margin of the Humid Pampa (Map 2).

The colony was established in 1905 when the Jewish Colonization Association purchased 246,210 acres from the Leloirs, one of Argentina's largest landowning families. This original purchase was augmented in 1908 by the purchase of more land, and today the total area of the colony is 273,950 acres. At the time of purchase the property was little more than virgin grassland. Neither road nor railroad connected it with the rest of Argentina, and even though the land had been cleared of hostile Indians during the Desert Campaigns thirty years before, it was scarcely utilized by the Leloirs, who likely had never seen their property. Except for scattered herds of sheep, cattle, and horses, under the indifferent attention of an estate manager and a few Gaucho employees, the site of the colony must have had the appearance it had when the first Spaniards explored the area.

The year prior to the purchase of Leloir, as the colony was originally known, a group of Jews in the region of Krivoi Rog, in the Ukraine, met in the city of Novo Bug to discuss the proposal of the JCA for the resettlement of Jews on the land in Argentina. By that time the JCA had already installed a considerable number of people, allotting them a specific acreage and providing house, well, farm equipment, horses, and cattle. Payment for this was to be by installments, usually with twenty years to pay.

Though the Jews who met at Novo Bug were eager to leave Russia, since anti-Semitism had been intensified as a result of government efforts to place on the Jews part of the blame for the Russian debacle during the Russo-Japanese War, they could not reach an agreement on the terms for settlement. However, the same group reconvened shortly afterwards in the nearby town of Dolinsk and moved to accept the plan for resettlement—but with certain important differences from the later policy of the JCA. A delegation was chosen from among the group and sent to Argentina to examine the future site of the colony. When word was received that the delegation approved the site, an agreement was drawn up between the future colonists and the Russian representative of the JCA, and preparations were begun to emigrate. These preparations were quite elaborate, since the emigrants proposed to carry along everything they hoped to put to use as soon as they arrived, including agricultural equipment.

MAP 2


64°
62°
60°
58°
56°
34°
36°
38°
CORDOBA
S.F.
E.R.
URUGUAY
BUENOS AIRES
LA PAMPA
ATLANTIC OCEAN
BUENOS AIRES
COLONIA BARON HIRSCH
BAHIA BLANCA
R.N.
SCALE
0 10 20 30 40 50 60
MILES
RAIL ROAD
E.R. - ENTRE RIOS
R.N. - RIO NEGRO
S.F. - SANTA FE

Their haste in leaving Russia was ill-advised, because upon their arrival in Buenos Aires they found that the Association had not completed the purchase of the future colony. Many of the immigrants had to seek jobs in the city, staying at the government-operated immigrant's hotel. Others went to Coronel Suárez, a town on the central Pampa which already had a large Jewish population. Here they found work in the wheat fields, glad to be working with fellow Jews to bring in a harvest.

Once the Association had assumed title to the land which was to be the future colony, and the colonists could be installed, it proved a major feat for the immigrants to find the colony. From the railhead at Carhué, the nearest town to the future colony, there was not even a trail which led to it, only trackless, gently rolling grassland, with virtually no geographical feature to orient one's direction. Unable to speak the language of the country, unfamiliar with the landscape, using half-wild horses to pull their heavily laden Russian carts, and with unfounded fears of impending battles with savage Indians and Gauchos, some families took a week to cover the twenty-five miles that separated Carhué from the colony.

Upon their arrival at the site of the colony, which by then had been named Barón Hirsch, in honor of the founder of the JCA, all that awaited them was the empty *estancia* residence of the manager of the Leloir estate and a large sheep barn. The latter had to be put to use as a communal dwelling for the first families until temporary shelters could be built. These first shelters were modeled after the Ukrainian *zemliankas,* which are similar to American root cellars. Gradually the colonists were able to construct more elaborate homes of adobe brick with zinc roofs. After the scarce trees and the available bushes had been cut down the only fuel available was the desiccated dung of the wild cattle found on the range. Though this was plentiful, it was extremely difficult for the women to become accustomed to its use for cooking and heating. Yet it was to remain an important fuel until the railroad reached the colony and fuel could be brought in.

POPULATION

Figure 1 provides a graphic illustration of the Jewish population of the colony through the first 55 years of its history.[1] From the settlement of the first 25 colonists and their families, comprising a total of 192 people, the population grew rapidly until 1912. This population increase was due not to the arrival of large groups, such as the first one that arrived, but to the installation of Polish and Russian Jews who were immigrating to Argentina singly or with their families. Many of these immigrants applied immediately to the Buenos Aires office of the JCA for land within the colony, and those who were deemed sufficiently experienced in agriculture were installed. Other immigrants moved to the colony to seek employment as agricultural laborers, hoping to acquire the necessary experience so that they might eventually be chosen by the Association for installation. In addition, in 1908 the JCA settled 38 families from Villa Alba and Médanos, two unsuccessful independent colonies situated on the even drier margins of the Pampa in the territory of La Pampa.[2]

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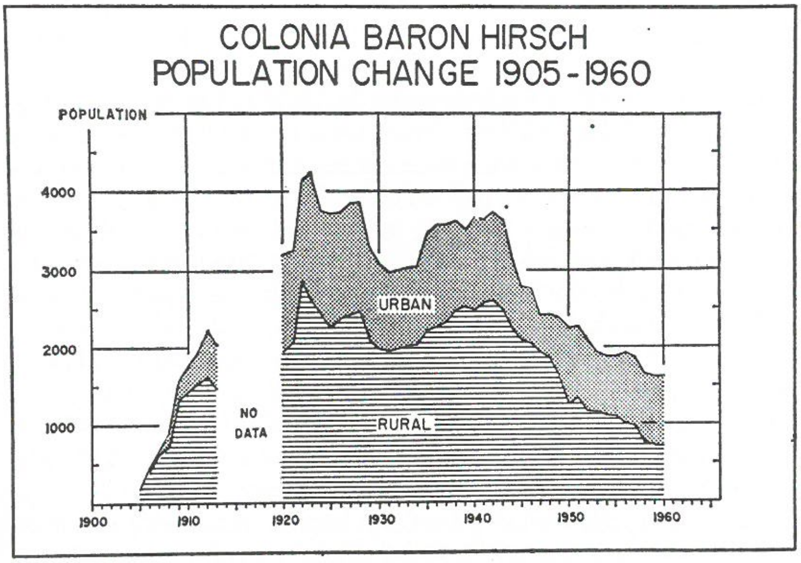
[1] To eliminate an overabundance of footnotes, unless otherwise stated all yearly statistics pertaining to Jewish Colonization Association colonies were taken from the annual reports of the Association.

FIGURE 1



Figures include Jewish population only.

Though data are not available to show the exact fluctuations, from 1912 to 1919 the colony had an irregular growth. Migration for much of that period was restricted because of the war in Europe. Without the steady flow of immigrants into the colony, there was a net decrease in population in some years because departures exceeded arrivals. Though discussed in detail later, it should be pointed out here that throughout the history of Colonia Barón Hirsch there has been a large turnover in occupants. For many reasons, but in particular due to the primitive conditions which existed in the colony when compared to the cities of Argentina, large numbers arrived, stayed a brief time, and then migrated to Buenos Aires or one of the other large cities in the nation.

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[2] Simon Weil, "Las Colonias Agrícolas," *50 Años de Colonización Judía en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1939), p. 158.

The decade of the twenties was one of initial growth and then rapid decline. In 1920, a group of 44 families was transferred to the colony from Narcisse Leven, a JCA colony in the Dry Pampa, 55 miles to the southwest of Barón Hirsch. In addition to this large group, Polish and Rumanian Jews resumed emigration from Europe after World War I, and some of those who arrived in Argentina were installed in Barón Hirsch. Russia, which contributed the bulk of Jewish immigrants to Argentina before the war, no longer was a major source as a result of the change in political orientation within the nation.

The colony reached its largest size in 1923, when it had a population of 4,219 Jews. Two main reasons might be offered for this. First, the enactment of more stringent immigration laws in the United States diverted a large number of Jewish immigrants to Argentina, some of whom chose to settle in the colony. Second, the prosperity of the nation's agricultural economy during the early years of the decade decreased the desire among the colonists to abandon the land. Nevertheless, by 1928, which was a disastrous year for the colony's agriculture, there began a rapid population decline as its inhabitants moved toward the cities.

The thirties began with a smaller population in Barón Hirsch than at any time during the twenties, but as the years passed there was an almost steady increase in the colony's population until 1942. Several reasons can be advanced to explain the colony's growth. First, during the economic depression of the thirties, the cities offered even less of an economic attraction to the colony's inhabitants than the rural areas. At least in the country there was a relative assurance that one could eat, and there was less dependency on income. Second, beginning in the 1930's the Argentine government began to specify that immigrants must take up agricultural occupations, thus forcing many incoming Jews to settle in the rural areas. Finally, the JCA in 1937 began to colonize German Jewish refugees who had begun to leave Germany during the wave of anti-Semitism which was sweeping the country.

In 1942 the colony suffered a serious reversal when drought destroyed the entire crop of wheat, barley, oats, and corn. As a result, the population declined precipitously. Jewish migration to Argentina virtually ceased during World War II, and upon the conclusion of the war the survivors of the German concentration camps generally chose to go to Israel or to the United States rather than to Argentina.

Without the continuous introduction of new immigrants to balance the flow of residents of Barón Hirsch to the cities, the population of the colony has been in almost continuous decline since 1942.

As already stated, immigration from Russia, Poland, and later Germany accounted for most of the population growth of the colony. In the character of this migration we can deduce the age and sex composition of the Jewish population in the colony in the past. Unlike so many people who emigrated to Argentina, most of the Jews came to settle permanently. Whereas the residue—immigrants minus emigrants—of all nationalities arriving in Argentina between 1857 and 1940 was slightly over 52 per cent, the residue of Jewish migration was much higher.[3] Most of the Jews who arrived in Argentina were fleeing the persecutions of Europe, seeking a new life. But they enjoyed no such liberty of movement as the majority of other nationalities. Those who left Russia usually had "one-way" passports, and could not return had they so desired. If they did leave Argentina after they had arrived, it usually was to go to the United States to rejoin relatives or because they felt there was greater economic opportunity there.[4]

In keeping with the forced nature of their migration, it was typical for whole families to emigrate, or, if there were a shortage of money for passage, the breadwinner would go alone to earn enough money to send for those who remained behind. The frequent movement of whole families meant that the sex ratio (number of males per 100 females) was in better balance in the colony than in other areas of Argentina with large immigrant populations. Some single Jews did arrive to work as agricultural laborers, but since the JCA rigidly enforced the policy that no person could be settled on Association land unless he were married, the majority of these laborers contracted marriage quickly or left the colony for the city.[5]

The age distribution of the colony also was affected by the character of the Jewish migration to Argentina. Unlike the majority of immigrants, who were heavily concentrated in the 25—50-year-old age group, the Jewish immigrants' ages were more evenly distributed.

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3. Gino Germani, "La Asimilación de los inmigrantes en la Argentina y el fenómeno del regreso en la inmigración reciente," *Revista Interamericana de Ciencias Sociales*, I (1961), 23.

4. Ira Rosenswaike, "The Jewish Population of Argentina," *Jewish Social Studies*, XXII (October, 1960), 201.

5. Jewish Colonization Association, *Su Obra en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1942), p. 18.

Thus, though the breadwinner of a Jewish family which settled in Colonia Barón Hirsch usually was between 20 and 40 years of age, he often brought his parents over from Europe with him, or arranged later for them to come.[6] This, plus the fact that he usually came with his wife and children, accounted for the fact that the older and younger age groups were well represented in the colony.

Little can be said concerning the births or deaths within the colony, since no data of this nature were kept. However, if we can make assumptions from the birth and death rates among Jews in their countries of origin at approximately the same period, we find that they must have been lower than the average for rural Argentina. There is no evidence that Jewish families experienced an increase in birth rates upon their arrival in the colony. Also, though sanitation facilities were extremely primitive in the initial period of colonization, causing high infant mortality, once the colony matured the death rate probably assumed the level it was in eastern Europe among the Jews. If medical attention is an index, we can assume that the death rate must have been considerably lower than it was for all of rural Argentina; from the beginning the colony had medical attention, though at first it was administered by unlicensed practitioners. Later, licensed doctors began to serve the colony, and at times there have been as many as four doctors with offices in the village of Rivera. The number of residents of Barón Hirsch per doctor has never risen over 1,000 since 1915—a respectable ratio for even some of the most advanced nations. Except for the period 1918 to 1922, a hospital has been in operation since 1915.

As previously mentioned, migration has been the major cause of the fluctuation in the colony's population. Those immigrants who arrived usually came directly from abroad, since few Jews who settled in the cities of Argentina expressed a desire to move to the country. Those few who did move to Barón Hirsch usually went because they found it difficult to adjust to their new life in an Argentine city.

Those who chose to move to the colony can usually be placed into three categories: first, there were those who were sincerely enthusiastic about coming to Argentina to farm; second, there were those who were so poor that they felt they had little choice but to apply to the JCA for land, even though they were not enthusiastic about farming; and finally, there were many who eagerly sought the intensely Jewish atmosphere which typified the colony in its early period, in order to avoid the cultural shock of moving into the more heterogeneous environment of one of Argentina's large cities. In the early days it was quite easy to live and work in the colony without having to use Spanish, many of the Gaucho laborers even having learned a smattering of Yiddish. The principal town in the colony, Rivera, well deserved the nickname it acquired, *Neuva Jerusalén* (New Jerusalem).

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[6] For an interesting account of the eventual reunion of a Russian Jewish family on one of the JCA colonies in Entre Ríos after the youngest son had emigrated to Argentina, see Enrique Dickmann's *Recuerdos de un Militante Socialista* (Buenos Aires, 1949). The author, who was the son responsible for effecting the reunion, eventually left the land and moved to Buenos Aires where he took his degree in medicine, later becoming one of Argentina's more illustrious political figures.

Just as the inflow of people accounts for the rapid increase in population of the colony during certain periods, the outflow in other periods caused the decline. In all years the two movements went on simultaneously, but in many years there was a huge excess of departures over arrivals.

Social Institutions

Under the agreement made in the Ukraine by the Russian representative of the JCA the colonists were permitted to choose their own land, which they did by lottery. They settled in three agricultural villages which lay within "groups," whose boundaries usually conformed with the Argentine land division known as a *lote.*[7] Each group was given a name. One was named in honor of Baron Hirsch, and the other two, Moses Montefiore and Adolphe Cremieux, bore the names of prominent western European Jews of the day. These names never won favor with the majority of the early colonists, who preferred to give them the names of the Ukrainian towns from which they came. Thus Barón Hirsch became Boyedarovka, Moses Montefiore bore the name Novo Bug, and Adolphe Cremieux was called Pietijadka.[8]

The village form of rural settlement was not typical of the general pattern of rural settlement in Argentina, which has always been one of widely dispersed farmsteads. However, the Russian Jews were not guided by Argentine agricultural traditions, but by Ukrainian, and in the Ukraine the village pattern prevailed. Undoubtedly their first desires were to facilitate social intercourse in their small colony, and the inefficiencies concomitant with the village form of settlement were secondary considerations. In the light of their ignorance of the Spanish language, their bewilderment and outright suspicion of what they considered a savage environment that they had moved into, and their conditioning in Russia, where by law most of them had been forced to live in ghettos, the election of rural village instead of dispersed settlement was understandable.

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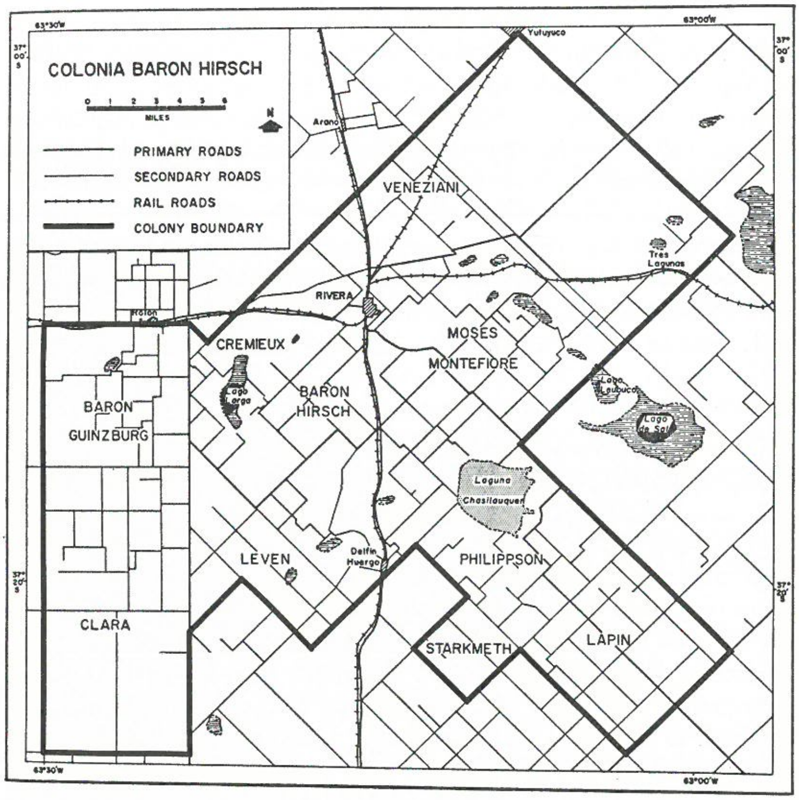
[7] An Argentine *lote* is 100 square kilometers (24,710 acres). Within the land division of the United States the township is the unit of area most comparable.

[8] Sanson Drucaroff (ed.), *Pioneros* (Buenos Aires, 1955), p. 80.

MAP 3


COLONIA BARON HIRSCH
0 1 2 3 4 5 6
MILES
N
PRIMARY ROADS
SECONDARY ROADS
RAIL ROADS
COLONY BOUNDARY
63°30'W
63°00'W
37° 00' S
37° 20' S
Yutuyuco
Arano
VENEZIANI
Tres Lagunas
RIVERA
Rolon
CREMIEUX
MOSES MONTEFIORE
Lago Loubuco
Lago de Sol
Lago Larga
BARON HIRSCH
BARON GUINZBURG
Laguna Chasilauquen
Delfin Huergo
LEVEN
PHILIPPSON
CLARA
STARKMETH
LAPIN

From the point of view of permitting an active social life the village system enjoyed an initial success, although, as will be seen later, it proved an economic liability to agricultural efficiency among the colony's residents. Even before all of the homes of the first settlers had been completed, rural synagogues and community bathhouses had been built in each of the groups. The synagogues were immediately put to use during the week as heders (traditional Hebrew elementary schools), where the children of the colonists received instruction in Hebrew and the reading of the Torah and Talmud.

Gradually, with the influx of people into the colony, new groups had to be created, and new rural villages were added to the older groups. This was necessitated because it was felt by the Association as well as by the colonists that if a rural village were permitted to exceed more than 25 families, it would impose undue hardship on some of the residents who owned land a great distance from the village.

By 1908 four more large groups had been added, Barón Guinzburg, Clara, Narcisse Leven, and Philippson. Guinzburg had two agricultural villages within it, Clara three, and Narcisse Leven and Philippson two each. Among the older groups Barón Hirsch had three villages by that date, Adolphe Cremieux four, and Moses Montefiore seven. In later years the Association had to create four additional groups, Tres Lagunas, Lapin (also known as Philippson III), Veneziani, and Starkmeth.[9] However, none of the four was ever to have more than one rural village.

From the beginning, when the colonists plowed a single furrow to act as a trail between the various villages, a rich social life developed in and around these tiny communities scattered throughout the colony. This social life centered around the synagogues and heders. Initially there was considerable attendance at sabbath services as well as at the many other religious holidays which are so important to the highly observant Jews. Moreover, the villages vied with each other in giving dances. Weddings were perhaps the most festive occasions in this initial period of the colony's history, some celebrations lasting for several days. Theatrical groups were also formed which put on many of the standard Yiddish classics such as Jacob Gordin's *Dvoirele* in addition to occasional works in Russian and eventually in Spanish.[10] Russian was spoken by many of the colonists as well as by some of the labor force of the colony which came from the adjacent colony of San Miguel. This colony was settled in 1903 by *Volksdeutsche* who had migrated from the Ukraine.[11]

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[9] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

[10] The early period of settlement in the JCA colonies has stimulated a number of books which have enjoyed wide circulation among the urban Jews of the nation. Some of the more popular or newer ones written in Spanish

The *Hevra Kaddisha,* the traditional burial society which was such a fixture of Jewish communities in Europe, was the first religious organization to tie the whole Jewish community together. Founded two years after the first settlement, it was instrumental in the creation of a cemetery laid out three miles south of Rivera, the agricultural village which later became the colony's principal town. Shohets were selected from the more religious men of the colony and charged with the responsibility for the ritual slaughter of animals to provide kosher meat.

As a result of the sparsity of population in the region in this early period, the Jews of Barón Hirsch had little opportunity to come into contact with people living outside the colony, especially native Argentines. Furthermore, because of the many preconceived ideas they had about Gauchos, the colonists had little desire to establish close contact with those natives who lived nearby.

On the other hand, the native Argentines must have found *los Rusos* (the Russians), as they came to call the colonists, a strange group.[12] Many of the Jewish men continued to wear Russian boots and peasant blouses long after they arrived. Some wore the long black *kapotes* (great coats) of the Orthodox Jews, and the majority were full-bearded. They spoke a language that was strange to the natives and many used equipment which they carried with them from Russia. Assuredly, this must have clashed violently with the typical early twentieth-century pampean landscape.

It should not be assumed that there was no contact between the two groups. The few stores which the early Jews patronized were owned by Argentines, and the Jews also employed Gauchos as la-

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that are not cited as references in this work are: Alberto Gerchunoff's *Los Gauchos Judíos* (Buenos Aires, 1957), José Liebermann's *Tierra Soñada* (Buenos Aires, 1959), Nicolas Rapaport's *Desde Lejos Hasta Ayer* (Buenos Aires, 1957), Ezequiel Schoijet's *Girones de Vida (en una Colonia Judía en la Argentina)* (Buenos Aires, 1961), and Natalio Budasoff's *Lluvias Salvajes* (Buenos Aires, 1962).

[11] *Volksdeutsche* refers to German-speaking people who live outside of Germany. During the Czarist regime large communities of *Volksdeutsche* were established in the Ukraine and in the Saratov District. Under the Soviets many communities were dispersed or relocated in Siberia.

[12] Though Argentina's Jews came from many different nations, even today they are commonly referred to as *Rusos* (Russians).

borers on their farms. Moreover, the contact which did occur between Jews and Gentiles was usually quite cordial, within the limits of not being truly able to communicate with one another because of the language barrier. Incidents such as the time a Gaucho, as a token of friendship, presented a side of beef to a colonist were not unusual. Though the recipient, because of kosher dietary laws, could not eat the beef, the sentiment behind the gift was appreciated. There were numerous other examples where Gauchos came to the assistance of the Jews during times of emergencies.

The colonists could not be absolved of blame for the occasional criminal acts which were perpetrated in the district during this formative period. Today, just as some Americans venerate many of the more infamous figures of the Far West of the United States, so Barón Hirsch has its folk hero, Shmilekl the Gaucho. Though little more than a gunman and common thief, Shmilekl added a peculiar twist to the usual gunman's motivations. Imbued with the revolutionary ideas of nineteenth-century Russia, he was also an anarchist, fighting for his distorted idea of social justice. Eventually Shmilekl met his end the way he had chosen to live, shot down on the main street of the infant town of Rivera.

It was this hamlet of Rivera, named after one of the signers of the Argentine Declaration of Independence, which eventually contributed to the complete alteration of the rural organization of the colony. In the first two years of settlement little differentiated this agricultural village from any of the others within the colony. However, in 1907 it was selected as a station on the first railroad which passed through the colony. This railroad, which connected the colony with Bahía Blanca to the south and Catriló to the north, provided Rivera with the stimulus to grow into the largest town within the colony.

A description of it in 1912 evokes impressions of what a village in the Far West of the United States must have been like at the time. Comprised of forty or so adobe brick one-story buildings—often with false fronts to simulate greater size, without sidewalks or paved streets, it was a typical frontier town.[13]

Shortly after the establishment of the railroad station in Rivera the rural villages began to disappear, victims of the town's rising importance in the colony's religious, educational, social, industrial, and commercial life. Furthermore, in time the Jews recognized that efficient farm management was difficult while they were living in rural villages, and they gradually dispersed onto their farms.

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[13] Gregorio Verbitsky, *Rivera, Afán de Medio Siglo* (Buenos Aires, 1955), p. 101.

In 1907 the JCA established its local administrative offices in Rivera and, at the same time, arranged for the construction of the principal school of the colony within the town. Five additional rural schools were built in various other parts of the colony. With the help of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle,* a European Jewish charitable organization to which Baron Hirsch had contributed large sums of money, personnel was sent to the colony to teach both religious and secular courses. Aside from the normal instruction of Argentine primary schools, the students were also trained in religion, Hebrew, and Yiddish. Initially the secular courses were taught in Spanish, often by Sephardic Jews from North Africa or Turkey. The native language of these Sephardic Jews was Ladino, as similar in its relationship to Spanish as Yiddish is to German.

In 1916 the JCA turned over all of its educational facilities in the colony to the national government. This move was brought about because Argentine educational officials repeatedly charged the Association with overemphasizing religious education to the exclusion of instilling an Argentine identity in the students. To a degree their charges were justified, but the emphasis on religion was no greater in the JCA schools than in many other religious schools in the nation during this period.

After 1916 the public schools were administered separately from the religious. Gradually, native Argentines, some of whom were second-generation Argentine Jews, began to staff the public schools. The Association did, however, continue its support of religious education and contributed large sums of money for its maintenance.[14]

It was approximately at the time of the arrival of the railroad that the *Asociación Israelita de Religión, Cultura y Beneficencia Barón Hirsch* (Jewish Religious, Cultural, and Mutual Aid Association of Barón Hirsch) was formed to organize the religious life of the community. In structure it was identical to the eastern European Jewish kehillah, a traditional religious governing body found in most Jewish communities. The *Asociación* maintained a close link with the *Kehillah Azhkenazim de Buenos Aires.*

It must be stated here that, though religion played an important part in the lives of many of the early immigrants, as the colony matured the residents' interest in religion decreased. This may be attributed to the fact that parents could not implant their ideas of extreme religious orthodoxy into the minds of their children. Without the modern concepts of Conservative and Reform Judaism, which helped maintain a religious interest among the Jews of the United States during this period of transition, the youth of Barón Hirsch often grew up to be ignorant of, and largely unsympathetic to, their native religion. Gradually the rural synagogues fell into disuse and were abandoned. However, the religious association did finally complete the Great Synagogue of Rivera in 1928, which is still the most imposing structure in the town.

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[14] Jedida Efron, "La Obra Escolar en Las Colonias Judías," *50 Años de Colonización Judía en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1939), p. 247.

In spite of the decreasing interest in religion, many institutions associated with ghetto life in eastern Europe were created. Among these was the *Bikkur holim,* a society responsible for the care of the sick. This organization was later reorganized into a women's aid society, *Sociedad de Damas de Beneficencia Baronesa Clara de Hirsch* (Baroness Clara Hirsch Women's Mutual Aid Society). Through the support of this society the colony hospital was established in 1915, charity drives were held to assist refugees or Zionist causes, and money was provided to give medical attention to those within the colony unable to afford it.

The rejection of religion by so many of the younger people did not deter them from developing a great interest in Yiddish culture. In 1912 the *Club de la Juventud Israelita para Recreo y Desarrollo Intelectual* (Jewish Youth Club for Recreation and Intellectual Development) was founded. Eventually a hall was built and equipped with Yiddish, Spanish, Russian, and Hebrew books. The center was to act for years as Rivera's principal movie theater, drama theater, and, until the Great Synagogue was completed, synagogue.

A second youth club was established four years after the *Club de la Juventud Israelita,* a product of the discord which existed among some of the Jews within the colony at the time. Called the *Unión Obrera Israelita* (Jewish Workers Union), it originally served as a bargaining group to press for better working conditions for its members, who were mainly village workers or agricultural laborers. For a time there was considerable hostility between members of the *Club,* who were mainly sons of landowning colonists, and the more humble members of the *Unión.* This hostility caused the *Unión* to duplicate the recreational facilities of the *Club.*

In 1919 the two clubs resolved their differences and united. The union was short-lived, because in 1924 they split. However, they were reunited the next year and have continued united ever since, under the name *Centro Cultural Israelita* (Jewish Cultural Center).

The *Centro* was instrumental in bringing such renowned Jewish intellectual figures as the writers Peretz Hirschbein, Hersh Nomberg, and Latzkie Bertoldi to Rivera to give lectures. In addition, important Argentine Gentiles were invited to address the members. Periodically, tributes were given honoring famous Jews such as Theodor Herzl, Sholem Aleichem, Israel Peretz, and many others. Occasionally famous Argentines were also honored. For example, the Argentine sociologist José Ingeneiros was the subject of an elaborate conference in which many members of the colony presented speeches on the man and his ideas. At these events it was not unusual for speeches to be given in Yiddish, Spanish, Russian, or German.

Aside from these social events there were a great many other recreational and educational activities. A chess club was established and occasionally the colony presented operettas and dramas. Furthermore, though the colony's population never rose much above 4,000, there was a remarkable proliferation of Zionist and political discussion groups. The colonists' views on such matters ran from the extreme right to the extreme left.

The Jews became politically conscious very quickly after their arrival, just as they did when they arrived in the United States. Enjoying an equality they had never possessed in their native countries, they developed a political consciousness that seemed much more vigorous than that found in other rural districts of Argentina. Furthermore, the political convictions of the colonists never reflected the general conservatism that typified Argentina's rural districts. It more nearly approximated the liberalism that was developing in the city of Buenos Aires.

For various periods the colony has also supported newspapers, a rarity in rural Argentina. The first newspaper to be published was the *Riverer Vogenblatt*, which was founded in 1916. Though enjoying only a short success, it was superseded by such publications as *Di Pampa, Unzer Vort, Rivera*, and *La Voz Local*. The last two newspapers mentioned were in Spanish, as is *Inquietudes*, which was founded in 1961.[15]

It can be seen from the language of these various newspapers that for a long period of time after its foundation Yiddish remained the lingua franca of the colony. Gradually Spanish supplanted this traditional language of the European Jews, but even today the majority of the second and third generation Argentine Jews continue to be bilingual.

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[15] Drucaroff, p. 177.

From this brief review of the social institutions of the colony in the past we can see that the early inhabitants voluntarily ghettoized themselves, gradually building a society that was almost impervious to Argentine cultural intrusion. One really cannot condemn them for this. The level of culture in the district they settled was that of a frontier and less sophisticated than that of the area from whence they had come. Little that they saw around them deserved emulation. As a result, they continued with the proven social institutions they had brought with them from the old country. Furthermore, they were conditioned by life in Europe, where they were often forcibly segregated from the rest of the populace, and where at times they did not even enjoy complete protection of the civil government.

Nevertheless, cracks did develop in the cultural shield that the Jews tried to erect. Most of the original acculturation was made in their adjustment to the physical environment of the Pampa. For example, the houses the Jews built conformed to the general architectural style of the Pampa. This arrangement was strictly utilitarian, a house having usually three or four rooms, with walls of adobe or brick cemented with mud mortar, supporting a galvanized steel roof. The clothes the Jews wore soon came to be the apparel of the Gaucho, who had evolved his mode of dress after centuries of living on the Pampa. The diet of the Jews also experienced a drastic change in response to the plentiful quantities of beef and wheat of the Pampa. The traditional eastern European Jewish dishes such as *borscht* (soup), *latkes* (pancakes), *tzimmes* (stew), and others, gave way to Gaucho specialties such as *asado* (barbecued beef), *puchero* (beef stew), *churrasco* (steak), spaghetti, and wheat bread. *Mate,* the Argentine tea, has also become extremely popular.

Acculturation was intensified in the 1930's, as the flow of observant eastern European Jews into the colony waned and the second and third generation Argentine Jews became more numerous. One by one the old Jewish cultural organizations lost their attraction to the colony's residents. A few disappeared, particularly a number of Zionist groups. Many more organizations passed into a limbo where they were maintained in name only, or had few active members.

The colony's counterpart of the kehillah, originally established to coordinate religious activities, was a good example of this. Other organizations continued to flourish, but they lost their Jewish character rapidly. For example, by 1945 the Jewish Cultural Center had accepted Gentile membership, and most of its activities differed little from those of other small-town Argentine social clubs. The arrival of the German Jews, beginning in 1937, did not stem the acculturation, since most of them had been highly assimilated into German society before their expulsion and had little sympathy with eastern European cultural institutions. Those who became permanent residents of the colony usually did not resist the increasing secularization and acculturation.

One should not feel that this acculturation was accomplished without tension. In the beginning there were assimilationists among the immigrants who scorned the attempts to recreate eastern European ghetto life. On the other hand, there were others who, once the Jewish cultural institutions began to weaken, resisted assimilation strongly. Many among this latter group found it impossible even to make compromises to the limitations on their lives imposed by the physical environment. Eventually a number left the colony because they could not accept the new trends, most of them going to Buenos Aires and joining the burgeoning Jewish community there. In Buenos Aires there were many who shared their views.

AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK

We have seen that difficulties arose from the inability of some of the residents of Colonia Barón Hirsch to adjust to the cultural changes in the community. However, these problems were minor when compared with those which accompanied the adjustment to the economic realities of the community. Perhaps the saddest feature of this situation was the hostility which arose among many of the residents of the colony against the JCA. Animosity was particularly bitter against the JCA's policy of colonist selection, the size of the farms issued, and the terms of the contracts that the Association drew up with the colonists. In many ways the residents were justified in their hostility, since the JCA did make serious mistakes in its early administration of the colony. However, part of the blame also rests with the colonists themselves, since not all of them chose to settle in the colony for the reasons for which Baron Hirsch had created it, a fact which will be discussed in detail later.

Before the JCA installed the first colonists onto the land, the colony was surveyed into square tracts of 370 acres (150 hectares). These tracts conformed to the general system of land division used within the province of Buenos Aires and the territory of La Pampa, where the colony was established. The land system is based on the rectangular system of the United States. However, in the province of Buenos Aires survey meridians run in a northeast-southwest bias, while in La Pampa the meridians follow the more conventional north-south bias. This can be clearly seen on the map of the colony (Map 3), since the colony roads conform to the provincial land division. It also can be seen from the map that many of the colony's groups conform to Argentine survey lots, which are each one hundred square kilometers in area. Groups that are included within one lot are Barón Guinzburg, Clara, Philippson, and Lapin. Starkmeth represents one quarter of a lot.

The division of the land into square tracts had a detrimental effect on the rural village settlement pattern. Many people who lived within these villages had to be assigned tracts a great distance from their homes. Eventually the inefficiencies associated with farming such a distance from the home led to the dispersion of the colonists onto their farms, the pattern of settlement most generally associated with the rectangular system of land division.

It was pointed out in the beginning of this chapter that the first group of colonists who reached Barón Hirsch were settled under different conditions from those who later applied to the Association for land. These conditions permitted an already established group of people to move directly from the Old World to Argentina to take up land. Upon its arrival, members of the group were each allowed to select one lot of 370 acres by lottery, for which they were given twenty years to reimburse the Association, at 5 per cent interest per annum. After twelve years each colonist could prepay his installments, and retire the mortgage as rapidly as he desired. Colonists also were enjoined by a private agreement to sell their property only to Jews if they chose to leave the colony. On their part, those who signed the agreement assumed the entire responsibility for transportation to Argentina, as well as the financing of all construction and other capital improvements on their property, without assistance from the Association.[16]

A detailed description of this contract has been given because it is perhaps the least demanding of any agreement for colonization drawn up between the Association and applicants for land in the colony's history. Actually few of the colonists settled under these liberal terms found much fault in them, though some malcontents felt that the Association had purchased the Leloir estate at an unreasonable price, thus inflating the price for the land the colonists agreed to buy.

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[16] Verbitsky, pp. 42-43.

Serious complaints arose with the settlement of later colonists under the usual policy of the Association. This policy was far removed from charity in the usual sense of the word, though it clearly illustrates Baron Hirsch's concept of it. Before his death in 1896 he repeatedly stated that he was willing to help his less fortunate coreligionists, but only if they would help themselves. We get a clear picture of his views on charity and colonization from his own letter to the Buenos Aires headquarters of the JCA written in 1891, during the chaotic initial period of settlement. To quote:

> How are we going to straighten things out? This is the big question. Here is the way I would do it.
> 1. Don't let anyone remain in the colonies who doesn't work with his hands . . . , and without pity or mercy throw anyone out who shows bad faith.
> 2. Severely examine the work of the colonists, and don't tolerate any infraction of our rules, even if the colonists offer the excuse of being sick or otherwise indisposed.
> 3. We shouldn't engage in costly installations until the colonists prove themselves worth the effort and expense by the sweat of their brow. To repeat what I have said before, install the colonists in a basic manner. It is necessary to demonstrate to them that if they want to start a new life they must be prepared to die of hunger or work under the crudest privation.[17]

Following the death of its founder, the officials of the Association continued to be highly exacting in all phases of the installation of colonists. Gradually, through trial and error, a plan was evolved for the selection of future colonists. Ideally, the plan called for European representatives of the JCA to travel throughout eastern Europe recruiting likely candidates who expressed a willingness to come to Argentina. One of the important stipulations for selection was that the individual have agricultural experience, since this would lessen the chances of failure once he was installed. Since the majority of the eastern European Jews lived in cities and villages and thus were inexperienced, schools were created in various countries for training them in agriculture. Though antedating the JCA, World ORT (*Obshestvo Rasprostrania Truda*), a Russian society for the training of Jews in agriculture and the manual arts, undertook much of the early education. Later, during the rise of anti-Semitism in Germany, World ORT and the JCA established farms near several German cities where Jews could be trained in agriculture.

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[17] Drucaroff, p. 26.

To attract recruits with agricultural experience directly from Europe may have been the ideal, but it was seldom the actual case. Thousands of Jews with no agricultural background fled Europe and went to Argentina. A number of those who arrived in the country applied to the Buenos Aires headquarters of the Association for land, while others went directly to the colony in search of it. In such cases, if the officials felt that the immigrant had sufficient potential to become a good farmer, he was given provisional status in the colony as a candidate for colonization. This meant that he was awarded a lot of 25 to 63 acres, provided with a house and well, and given enough money to purchase equipment and livestock. Rent was charged on his lot on the basis of 4 per cent per annum on the value of the land, and 5 per cent on the value of the buildings. This came to approximately $2.50 to $5.00 per month. The candidate was expected to work for neighboring colonists while tending his own reduced lot. In this way he would gain agricultural experience. Periodically, the administrator would review the progress of the candidate. If it were felt that he had made sufficient progress and demonstrated initiative and sincerity, the administrator could advise the Buenos Aires headquarters to settle him on a standard-sized lot. If it were judged that his progress was unsatisfactory, he could be dislodged or given more time to prove himself.[18]

Conditions for the installation of a colonist were also carefully defined by the JCA. Though these conditions have varied throughout the history of the colony, the ones given below are typical of those upon which most colonists in Barón Hirsch were installed.

1. The colonist is awarded a lot which varies in size from 185 to 370 acres, depending on the productivity of the land.
2. The following inventory will be provided upon the colonist's installation.

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[18] Jewish Colonization Association, p. 20.

House (2 rooms and a kitchen)
Boundary fences with 1 or 2 dividing fences
Well (sometimes to be shared with a neighbor)
Poultry run, shed, yard, etc., enclosed with a chicken wire fence
1 bull (shared with another colonist)
10 to 20 cows or heifers
8 to 10 horses
25 to 50 fowl
Wagon
Plow
Harrow
Harness
Furniture for the house
Miscellaneous implements
Seeds
A loan for travel expenses to the colony if necessary
Maintenance for the first few months until the colonist is established.

3. The colonist must sign a rental contract with the following stipulations:

a. He must pay all land taxes.

b. A rent will be charged calculated on the basis of 4 per cent on the value of the land and 5 per cent on the value of the buildings.

4. The contract is annual, automatically renewable yearly during a period of five years. Upon the completion of five years, if the colonist has demonstrated his ability in farming, he will be awarded a new contract for a period from three to five years.

5. The inventory granted by the JCA will be paid in a maximum of eight years from installation at 5 per cent interest.

6. At the time the colonist signs the original contract he will be awarded a promise of sale which stipulates that after eight years, if he complies with the terms of the agreement, having paid back the value of the inventory and buildings, and 50 per cent of the value of the land, he will be given a definite title deed with a nine-year mortgage at 4 per cent interest.[19]

Provisions were also made for the installation of the sons of colonists. However, as will be seen later, the policy the JCA adopted toward awarding land to the sons varied considerably throughout the history of the colony and was one of the most serious sources of conflict between the colonists and the Association.

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[19] *Ibid.*, pp. 21-24.

Little fault can be found in the procedures for recruitment or the terms of the Association contract. Actually the system has been eulogized in publications both within Argentina and abroad.[20] However, despite the warm praise the system received, open hostility developed between the Association and the colonists. It seems appropriate at this time to delve into the reasons for this hostility, since it is one of the most important aspects of the history of the colony.

One of the most significant differences between the two groups was a conflict of purposes of the colonization program. The Association saw itself as engaged in the noble cause of rescuing Jews from eastern Europe, settling them on the land in Argentina, and helping them become good middle-class farmers. To many Jews who were issued land by the JCA, the last two goals of the Association held little attraction. They simply recognized the futility of remaining in Europe to face the increasingly vitriolic economic and religious persecution. Whereas the Association felt that those it settled in the Argentine colonies should be eternally grateful for being permitted to forge a new life as farmers on the Argentine Pampa, many of the poor European Jews accepted the land as the only way they could quickly rebuild a new life in Argentina without any capital of their own. Some of the more timorous saw the additional advantage of moving to a place where they would find most of the cultural institutions they left behind in Europe. Though the Association continually tried to weed out this "insincere" element from the colony, it was only natural that many who were installed were only biding their time until they had enough capital or saw an opportunity to move back to an urban environment where they could resume occupations they had abandoned in Europe.

It would be wrong to conclude that all, or even nearly all, of the colonists were using the Association as a means to re-establish themselves in the city. There were many who arrived with high hopes of establishing themselves permanently on the land. Throughout the nineteenth century a movement swept through the fetid ghettos of eastern Europe which was founded on the premise that to bring about the moral resurgence of the Jews there must be a great movement to the land. Some adherents to this concept dreamt of settlement in *Eretz Israel* (the Holy Land), but others, for example, the *Am Olam* (Eternal People) movement, envisioned rebuilding Jewish life on a cooperative basis on farms in the Western Hemisphere.[21] Unquestionably there were many residents of Barón Hirsch who, if not actual members of the *Am Olam*, believed strongly in its ideals. Though not always well equipped to meet the challenge of life in the colony, these people sincerely worked to make a success out of their new life.

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[20] Two authors, among others, who eulogized the system were Carl C. Taylor, *Rural Life in Argentina* (Baton Rouge, 1948), pp. 337-42, and Roberto Schopflocher, *Historia de la Colonización Agrícola en Argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1955), p. 65.

The Association-appointed colony administrator did not have an easy job during the period of settlement in Barón Hirsch. He held a highly responsible position, since he was charged with the duty of ascertaining if a candidate for colonization should be assigned a larger lot, if a renter should be given title to his land or continue in his present status, or if a candidate or colonist should be dislodged for insincerity or incompetence. He also was empowered with the job of approving the extension of credit to those he thought needed it, or he could waive interest on JCA loans under certain circumstances. Small wonder that there were those among the colonists who were convinced that they were being tyrannized by these officials, though the JCA felt that it was taking normal precautions to promote orderly growth within the colony.

Unfortunately for the JCA, not all of its administrators in Barón Hirsch were equipped with the sound judgment and diplomacy required for such a position. Sometimes it took considerable knowledge to judge if a person's failure to establish himself well on the land were due to the vicissitudes of nature (hail, drought, etc.), Argentina's fluctuating agricultural prices, his lack of sincerity, or his incompetence. Consequently, at times the dislodgments ordered by the administrators were both cruel and unjust. Not that unfair dislodgments were a frequent occurrence, but those that did take place burned an indelible impression in the minds of those who remained behind. There were some residents of the colony who came to fear, or even to hate, the administrator and the JCA, thinking only of all the real or alleged wrongs that were perpetrated against friends and neighbors, or even themselves.[22]

One of the most persistent complaints made against the Association was the long period that had to lapse before the colonists could obtain title to their land. The motive behind this rule was to protect the Association from the colonists gaining title to their land at an early period, then selling the property and moving to the city. During the early period of the twentieth century Argentina experienced a huge increase in her export of wheat and meat, with corresponding increases in the value of her agricultural land. As the price of land rose, there was an irresistible temptation among many colonists to sell out, take the profits earned in the sale of the land, and go to the city to invest in a business or industry with which they were more familiar. The move to the city was doubly inviting, since during this period Argentina was developing light industry, as for example the garment industry, in which many colonists were experienced.

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[21] Wischnitzer, pp. 60-61.

[22] Drucaroff, p. 105.

The Association was forced to watch the dissolution of Colonia Mauricio for the reasons stated above. Situated in a wetter and more fertile part of the Humid Pampa near the town of Carlos Caseros, and purchased cheaply in 1891 during a period of economic depression, the JCA sold the land to the colonists at low prices. The price of land in Mauricio increased with the general rise in land values throughout Argentina. In some cases, within a few years the value had risen five times what the colonists contracted to buy it for. Recognizing the potential source of liquid capital they had, the colonists set up a clamor for their titles, which the Association wisely refused to grant them. Appeal after appeal was directed to the Association and lengthy court litigation was initiated by the colonists. Finally, in frustration, the Association conceded to their demands, issuing them titles and mortgages. A mass exodus from the colony quickly followed, as the colonists either sold or rented their land to Gentiles, or, in a few cases, sold to other Jews. Moving to Buenos Aires with their capital, many became successful businessmen within a short time.[23] Today the colony no longer exists, the JCA having removed its representative from it many years ago. The Jewish population has fallen from a high of over 3,000 in 1919 to a handful today. Seventy-three per cent of the land issued to Jewish colonists has been sold to Gentiles.

Another source of friction between the two groups developed over the size of the farms issued to the colonists. The first colonists were settled on 370-acre farms, a size which the JCA felt was suffi-

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23. The following book is an autobiography of a colonist of Mauricio who rented his land to move to Buenos Aires and became a highly successful furniture dealer: Boris Garfunkel, *Narro de Mi Vida* (Buenos Aires, 1960).

cient to permit their conversion into middle-class farmers. However, the colonists contended that their farms were too small to diversify agricultural production, which the Association was continually advising them to do. With only 370 acres they believed they had little choice except to plant wheat, since in good years this crop earned them sufficient money to meet their mortgages and have a little left over for other expenses. To accept advice to diversify by raising cattle was believed impossible, since they had insufficient land to support many head. During World War I, when wheat prices were depressed but cattle prices high, the JCA relented in its policy of issuing 370 acres to the degree that it permitted the rental of an additional 370 acres on five-year leases to some colonists for use as pasture. However, when wheat prices rose, it ceased to issue leases and refused to renew the leases which had been issued. Immediately after the war it actually began to install some colonists on 185-acre farms. The issuing of these smaller farms caused much complaint, and eventually the old policy of issuing 370-acre farms was reinstated. As will be shown later, the colonists were justified in their claim that even 370 acres were insufficient for them to establish themselves well on land within the colony.

The 370-acre farm was the average size holding in the colony for the entire period under discussion in this chapter (1905-45). However, there were some who were installed on 185 acres and never received an additional 185 acres. A handful of colonists were issued two 370-acre lots, usually in parts of the colony where the productivity of the soil was so low that it warranted larger acreage. Also, with the departure of colonists who had gained title to the land, some property was sold or leased to those colonists who remained. In this way, by 1945 a few farms came to exceed 1,000 acres in size.

The sale or rental of property by colonists who had received title to their land and decided to abandon it never reached the proportion that it did in Colonia Mauricio—not that it would not have, had the colonists had the opportunity to sell. However, the JCA did everything in its power to avoid a duplication of what occurred in Mauricio, and even by 1945 it had given title to only 80,045 acres of land. Nevertheless, on a smaller scale, the same situation arose in Barón Hirsch that took place in Mauricio. In 1945, 28.3 per cent of the property to which the colonists had been given title either had been sold or rented to other colonists. An additional 13.7 per cent had been rented or sold to Gentiles.

The colonists also were hostile toward the JCA because of its refusal to rent land to them from the colony reserve. Although, as was just mentioned, the Association did rent land to many of the colonists at the time of World War I, it was not its usual practice. However, it did rent its reserves to neighboring Gentiles who owned large estates. This action incensed many colonists, who regarded it as unjust.[24] The JCA countered by taking the stand that it refused to rent reserves to colonists out of fear that they would install sharecroppers on the rented property, something that was totally alien to the goals of the JCA colonization program.[25]

The policy of the JCA toward the installation of sons of colonists also caused much agitation. Logically, those colonists who felt there was a future in farming were eager for the Association to set aside reserves of land near their own farms for their sons. However, the Association refused to install many children, especially during the first thirty years of colonization, and a great many had to leave the colony for lack of an opportunity there. The JCA justified its position by stating that, though it would settle as many deserving children as it could, it was primarily concerned with settling Jews from abroad. The colonists retorted by stating that the immigrants could be settled elsewhere. The Association's rebuttal was that it was precisely because the younger children had learned how to farm in Argentina that they should be the ones to leave. The immigrants should be permitted to settle in the colony, where they could continue to live in a Jewish environment, while learning Argentine farming methods from experienced Argentine Jewish farmers.[26]

The difficulty of acquiring farm land in the colony caused many colonists' sons to leave. Most went directly to the city, but a few attempted to farm outside the colony. Unfortunately, the majority of these attempts failed. One of the worst failures was that of the ill-fated Colonia Mari Mamuel, which was to be located on land along the western border of Barón Hirsch. Because of a title litigation that developed as the first colonists were being settled, the scheme collapsed and the hopes of the aspiring young colonists to farm next to their parents were shattered. Several other group attempts to find farm land outside the colony met with the same fate as that of Colonia Mari Mamuel.

Those sons who left singly to look for land usually found that what suitable farm land there was available was too expensive to purchase. If they persisted in their desire to farm they usually were forced into accepting the standard leasing arrangements offered by the large-scale Argentine landowners to their tenants. These leases were generally short-term, often for as little as five years, with little assurance of renewal. Much of Argentina's rural poverty can be attributed to these short-term leases. Without assurance of control of the land for a prolonged period the tenant had no desire to make expensive improvements either on the land itself or on his home and outbuildings.[27]

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[24] Drucaroff, p. 91. [25] Verbitsky, p. 127. [26] *Ibid.*, p. 129.

Today, in retrospect, it can be seen that the JCA policy to hold back reserves from the colonists, and particularly from their sons, was ill-advised. However, not being gifted with clairvoyance, the directors of the Association could not have predicted the German destruction of European Jewry or the postwar diversion of Jewish migration to Israel. It can be said in the Association's favor that as soon as it could be seen that Argentina would no longer be the recipient of a large flow of Jewish immigrants, it liberalized its policy of granting reserves.

There is one more factor which militated against a rapport between the colonists and the JCA. An almost insurmountable gulf was created by the fact that the JCA was conceived and largely staffed by the more cosmopolitan western European Jews, whose views clashed severely with the more traditional views of the eastern European Jews who had only recently left the confines of ghetto life. This animosity was not confined merely to the relationship of the JCA and those who lived within its colonies, but it arose in all western nations with established Jewish communities that were flooded by eastern European Jews during the great exodus that began in 1881. When it came to the implementation of the policies of the JCA toward colonization, the colonists often bridled at the cold, impersonal leadership of the JCA functionaries, who in some cases could not even speak Yiddish.[28] To many eastern European Jews the latter fact was a sure sign that they had been contaminated by Gentile assimilation and did not have the colonists' interests at heart.

The physical environment of Barón Hirsch also made a strong imprint on its development; if the early directors of the Association had taken greater pains in comprehending the limitations of this and had adjusted their policies of colonization to it, much of the hostility between it and the colonists would never have arisen.

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[27] Taylor, p. 202.

[28] Marcos Alpersohn, "Los Primeros Directores de la JCA," *Judaica*, V (April, 1938), 172-80.

At the time the Jews settled in Colonia Barón Hirsch, Argentina was coming to the close of a period of rapid expansion in her crop agriculture. Between 1899 and 1911 the total land in crops had expanded from 16 million acres to over 50 million acres, and the greatest share of the increased acreage was put to wheat production. Argentina was responding to the increased demand for imported wheat in the rapidly industrializing western European nations.

As a result of the high price of wheat on the international market, by 1905 most of the best land in Argentina was either not for sale or could be purchased only at exorbitant prices. When the JCA began to search for economical land to colonize it was forced to purchase marginal land. Barón Hirsch is a good example, since when it was purchased in 1905 it was situated beyond the frontier of wheat production—a frontier which had already expanded almost to the climatic limits for stable wheat production. It can be said with validity that the first group of Jews to settle in the colony were pioneers, since the agricultural frontier did not arrive until two years later when the first railroad reached the colony and permitted the colonists to raise and market their wheat.

It did not take the colonists long to realize that their new home was on the outer margin of the truly arable Pampa. Problems related to the physical environment of the colony have plagued its residents up through the present day.

The climate of the colony has always rigidly circumscribed the economic life of its inhabitants. Located on the outer margin of Argentina's Humid Pampa, the colony's weather station has recorded an average annual rainfall of 24.2 inches, based on 43 years of weather observation. The seasonal distribution is not great, though there is a definite summer maximum. The rainiest month of the year is March with 3.4 inches, the driest month is August, with .9 inches. The quantity of rainfall is not enough to prevent crop production. It is the dependability of the rainfall which has been the critical factor in the economic progress of the colony. In many years the weather more nearly corresponds to the Dry Pampa to the west rather than to the Humid Pampa to the east. If we examine the 43 years of precipitation data we find that 27 per cent of the years have experienced less than 20 inches of rainfall. No information has been gathered on the microclimatology of the colony. However, because of the local nature of the summer convectional precipitation, some parts of the colony have been known to suffer from drought while other parts may have sufficient rainfall to produce high yields at harvest time. Over the years Barón Guinzburg and Clara, the two groups situated in the province of La Pampa to the west, have shown a much higher incidence of crop failure from drought than have any of the other groups in the colony.

By way of further illuminating the climatic characteristics of the colony, we find there is a close similarity between the climate of Barón Hirsch and that of southern Kansas on the 24-inch isohyet. The one major difference between the two regions is that the annual range in temperature of the colony is less than in southern Kansas, due to its more maritime position. The July average for the colony is 45°F., while the January average is 74.5°F. The growing season averages approximately 200 days, though killing frosts are a frequent hazard to crops and can be experienced as late in the spring as early November. Just as in Kansas, tornadoes, hailstorms, and severe frontal storms known in Argentina as pamperos, often cause considerable local crop damage.

The soils have also had an adverse effect on the economic development of the colony. These soils owe their origin to the deposition of wind-blown material, transported from the Dry Pampa farther to the west. Because of the proximity of the colony to the source region of the material, that which is laid down within it is over 60 per cent coarse sand in texture, the finer material being able to remain aloft until it is carried deeper into the Humid Pampa to the east. The early colonists encountered mobile sand dunes upon their arrival, but today in all but the driest years these have been stabilized.

Alkalinity of the soils is high, being pH 7 or slightly more within the first six inches from the surface, but increasing rapidly with depth. A calcareous hardpan, referred to by Argentines as *tosca,* usually lies close to the surface. In many places severe wind erosion, aggravated by excessive crop production, has exposed this rock-like layer, rendering the land totally unsuitable for cultivation.

The porosity of the sandy soil is detrimental to moisture retention. This, plus the fact that precipitation is low, has militated against any fresh surface water in the area, though there are several highly mineralized lakes in basins within the colony, some permanent. Potable water is brought to the surface from shallow wells, though even this water has a high concentration of soluble salts. Soil salinity is the chief factor governing soil fertility in the colony. The best soils, those with low concentrations of soluble salts near the surface, are found in the southwest, within the Lapin and Starkmeth groups. The worst soils are found in the Philippson and Tres Lagunas groups, especially surrounding the dry lakes.

Once the railroad had connected the colony with Bahía Blanca it was logical that the interests of the colonists should turn toward wheat production. At the time the colony was founded, wheat had become Argentina's major cash crop, and the entire southwestern part of the province of Buenos Aires was rapidly becoming one of the nation's most important producing regions. Had they wanted to, the colonists could not have chosen Argentina's other great source of wealth, stock raising. With the low carrying capacity of the colony's pastures, it would have taken a considerably larger farm than 370 acres to graze enough cattle to provide an income sufficient on which to live and pay off a mortgage. Table 1 shows the importance attached to wheat production within the colony. In the years 1911-15 almost 80 per cent of the cropland was put to this grain.

TABLE 1

WHEAT STATISTICS

	00 Acres Planted	000 Bushels	Bushels per Acre		Per Cent of Total Cropland	Per Cent Abandoned
			Planted	Harvested		
Average						
1956-60	642	811	12.5	14.5	49	11
1951-55	627	701	11.2	16.5	45	32
1946-50	381	260	6.8	11.4	39	31
1941-45	369	370	10.1	13.0	44	27
1936-40	302	115	3.8	9.1	34	29
1931-35	413	323	7.8	9.3E	42	25E
1926-30	451	296	6.5	9.1E	44	13E
1921-25	487	403	8.3	10.3	52	10
1916-20	na	na	na	na	na	na
1911-15	729	360	4.9	5.7	79	14
1906-10	235	114	4.8	5.9	58	19

E—Estimate
na—not available

Climatic conditions within the colony are far from optimum for wheat production, though in normal years yields are satisfactory. It has been the variability in the precipitation which largely accounts for the fact that yields of wheat per acre over a 46-year period have shown a mean deviation from the average of 48 per cent. A deviation of this amount is typical of the winter wheat belt in Kansas near the 20-inch isohyet.

Over half the rainfall in the colony occurs in the warm months, when due to a high rate of evaporation its effectiveness is reduced. The amount of rainfall in the five dormant months (April to August) averages 6.6 inches. After such a protracted period of low rainfall, much depends on the rains which fall in late September and October. If in these months rain fails to arrive—and there were six years between 1918 and 1960 that had less than 2 inches during these months—the damage to the wheat crop can be serious. In years of especially severe winter drought, by June and July the surface of the ground can become so dry that it becomes impractical to sow wheat, and wheat already sown will not germinate. In five of the years since 1906 drought was so severe in the colony that the entire wheat crop was destroyed. In nine other years lack of rainfall lowered the yields significantly.

Too much rainfall at the crucial harvest time in December can be equally damaging to the wheat crop. Between 1918 and 1960 three years received over 7 inches of rainfall in this month. In one year, 1946, 90 per cent of the acreage planted had to be abandoned. Hail, also a form of precipitation, has caused much local damage to the wheat fields during the summer; it is almost an annual occurrence somewhere within the colony.

The other two elements of weather, temperature and wind, also have exerted strong influence on the size of the wheat harvest. There have been times during the summer when strong hot winds have blown out of the extremely hot Chaco in the north and wilted the wheat. Tornadoes have been known to cause considerable local damage in various parts of the colony.

Other natural obstacles which have prevented high wheat yields within the colony are the coarse-textured soils, with their high concentrations of soluble salt and alkali and poor soil water retention. In addition, rust and smut have reduced yields in certain years, as have locusts. In some years the locusts have swarmed in such numbers that some fields have been virtually stripped of vegetation.

The size of the farms the Association issued the colonists also adversely affected wheat yields, since it was entirely inadequate for sustained wheat production in the colony's dry climate. One has only to look at the problems that arose in the "Dust Bowl" of the United States to surmise what happened within the colony. Like many homesteaders of western Kansas and Oklahoma, the small landowners of Barón Hirsch were reduced to a monoculture, based on wheat almost to the exclusion of any other crop. Wheat was the only crop they could grow which, if the harvest were satisfactory, would return a big enough profit to meet the mortgage installments, to provide additional income for capital improvements on the farm, and to defray other expenses.

The colonists planted as much of their farm to wheat as time and their limited equipment would allow. No thought could be given to dry farming, with its associated summer fallow, since the reduced acreages would have made it impossible to earn an adequate profit if land were withdrawn from production each year to lie fallow. Instead, they planted to the maximum, quickly exhausting the soil of its fertility and of the limited soil moisture built up in the humid years. As a result the farmers became even more dependent on each year's rainfall, since without summer fallow there could be no carry-over of soil moisture from the preceding year.

Stranded farmers, that is, farmers who have established themselves on the land under conditions where they cannot make a suitable income to live adequately, have not been a major problem in Argentina as in the United States. The land-tenure system of Argentina has prevented it, since most property is held in large units. Owners will lease land to tenants on short-term contracts during periods when wheat production is more profitable than cattle production. If economic conditions change and cattle production becomes more profitable, the leases are not renewed when they expire and the land is turned to pasture. Though often more destitute than any stranded farmer in the United States, the landless Argentine tenant must move elsewhere, usually to the city.

In many ways the colonists of Barón Hirsch became stranded, though perhaps not to the degree that the small-scale farmers of Oklahoma, Kansas, and Texas have been stranded. The American farmer who settled on the dry margin of the Great Plains frequently knew no other way of life and clung to his land with a tenacity created by the fear of attempting something new. Only after the succession of drought years which occurred in the 1930's were many finally driven off the land. The Jews of Barón Hirsch had only recently moved from an urban to a rural environment and had no roots in agriculture. Fortunately, many recognized the futility of establishing themselves in the colony on their small farms and moved back.

The inexperience of so many of the early colonists in agriculture, especially agriculture in Argentina, retarded the economic development of the colony. Even those among the first colonists to arrive who had agricultural experience were at a loss as to when to plant because of the reversal of the seasons in the Southern Hemisphere. The early Jews had to seek the advice of the local Argentines or the JCA. Yet the native Argentines of the area had only the most rudimentary knowledge of wheat farming, since the few who lived there at the time the Jews arrived were ranchers, only beginning to plant wheat at the same time as did the Jews. The JCA proved no better as a source of advice, since its officers were almost exclusively urban western European Jews, versed in business and finance, but with little understanding of agriculture. Some technical support was provided the colonists, but for a long period of time the man employed to give advice was a French Jew, experienced in intensive agriculture such as viticulture, but with little knowledge of extensive wheat farming.[29] Some of the advice he offered was useful, but much had little relevance to the problems the colonists had to face. As a result, the colonists learned to farm through costly trial and error.

One of the major errors made by the first group of colonists to arrive was the transporting of so much agricultural equipment from Russia. Much of it was unsuited for working land within the colony; however, lack of capital prevented the rapid introduction of the modern equipment that was being developed in North America for use in the wheat fields of the Great Plains, and the colonists had to continue to use antiquated equipment. The lister plow, which gained wide acceptance in the wheatlands of the United States before the turn of the century, was not widely used in the colony before 1920. By that date the vertical disk plow (one-way plow) had gained popularity in the United States, but even in 1945 there were few of these in the colony. This was due to the fact that until recently the dominant source of power in the colony was the horse, and the vertical disk plow can be operated with much greater efficiency behind a tractor. However, even by 1945 there were only two tractors in use in the colony. Also, at this late date a few colonists were still broadcasting their seed by hand, though the majority had purchased seed drills.

Perhaps the most frustrating problem to the colonists was harvesting. The binder and stationary thresher were the principal wheat-harvesting combination for the colony for years. Although most large-scale Argentine wheat growers could afford to purchase such equipment, few colonists could or would hazard such a large investment. Instead, they usually relied upon custom threshing crews who would come in and, for a fee, harvest the crop. The slow and arduous process of threshing would go on for well over a month and involve large numbers of laborers. Farmers would have to wait patiently for the threshing crews to arrive at their farms and begin work. At times, before the crews arrived, the crop would be lost because of rain, wind, or some other act of nature. In time, the header, which is a much more efficient piece of equipment for harvesting, was introduced. Only since 1940 has the combine been used to a high degree in the colony's harvest.

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[29] Verbitsky, p. 122.

The cost of agricultural equipment, which ordinarily had to be imported from abroad, and the fact that most of it was designed for the large Argentine farms created certain difficulties. Some of the colonists resolved these difficulties by purchasing the equipment despite the debts which they incurred. In some cases those who chose this course were forced into bankruptcy and had to abandon their property, or if they held title to it, to mortgage it.

Another alternative was to employ a large amount of labor and use less equipment. There was a plentiful supply of labor in the area before 1945. Some colonists, perhaps trying to emulate the large-scale landowners of the nation, and, unable or unwilling to see that this could be warranted only by sufficiently large acreage, employed excessively large numbers of Gaucho workers and converted themselves into managers of their 370-acre farms. The same fate befell many of them as befell those who purchased too much equipment. Eventually most of them either abandoned their land or discharged some of the workers and went back to farming the land themselves.

The colonists also faced external problems which prevented orderly economic development within Barón Hirsch. The most important of these was the violent fluctuation in the world demand and price for wheat. In both World War I and World War II, European nations gave priority to the purchase of the more valuable Argentine beef, and endeavored to stimulate domestic wheat production; consequently, a situation arose in Argentina where wheat production was unprofitable. The owners of large estates, being more flexible, quickly turned from wheat production. The Jewish colonists, on their 370-

acre farms, enjoyed no such flexibility. They had to continue to concentrate on wheat farming, using expensive imported machinery, depending upon a diminishing and more expensive labor supply, and receiving lower prices for their wheat crop.

Table 1 indicates the high percentage of wheat-field abandonment within the colony, a situation typical of the whole region in which it is located. Most of this may be attributed to climatic variability. However, it can be seen that there was a much higher rate of abandonment from 1931 to 1945 than there was in the earlier period of colonization. Not all of this was due to nature. Through much of this period the colonists continued to put large acreage in wheat, though the price of wheat on the international market was low. Many years the colonists would harvest only the most promising fields, and abandon the poorer fields for use as cattle pasture.

Those unfamiliar with the problems of agriculture in Colonia Barón Hirsch would be amazed at the small yields of wheat per acre (Table 1) in the colony as compared to yields in similar climatic regions in the United States. Even when compared with yields in the more humid parts of the Pampa they are quite small. The poor physical environment of the colony is the obvious factor to explain these low yields. However, the inexperience of the Jewish farmers in the early period of settlement was important. One can see a marked increase in wheat yields over the years, which, among other factors, indicates that they were gaining more knowledge about the science of wheat farming.

The Jews of Barón Hirsch who decided to remain and seek their destiny in agriculture usually turned into as capable wheat farmers as average Gentile farmers within the region. There is no evidence to show any substantial difference between the sophistication of wheat farming as practiced by the Gentiles in the area and that by the Jews on comparably sized farms. In 1941, Herman Levy, a colonist from Starkmeth group, won a grand prize in the wheat competition at the annual National Livestock Exposition in Buenos Aires.

The colonists did not grow wheat to the exclusion of all other crops (Table 2). Barley was introduced to the region in the early part of the century and has been grown in significant quantities within the colony from the beginning. For most years malting-barley acreage has far exceeded that grown for forage, though each year as many as a thousand acres are devoted to the latter crop. Physical conditions are actually more favorable for barley than for wheat, since barley will withstand greater concentrations of alkali and soluble salts in the soil. However, the fluctuation of interest in barley cultivation is directly related to its price as compared to that of wheat. In most years this price relationship distinctly favors wheat.

Rye, oats, and corn are other grains which were introduced early but never achieved the importance of wheat. It might be assumed that the Jews began to cultivate rye for their own use, since it was a popular bread-grain grown in the area from which they came. Actually, this was not the case, for the Jews accepted the practice of making bread from wheat upon their arrival in Argentina. Moreover, the whole zone in which the colony is located became important in rye production, which is well suited to its sandy soils and periodic droughts. Most of the rye grown in the zone is used as forage for livestock. Consequently, because of the small livestock population in the colony, Barón Hirsch has always had a disproportionately low rye acreage compared with the rest of the *partido* of Adolfo Alsina.

TABLE 2

LAND IN CROPS

	Wheat 00 Acres	Alfalfa 00 Acres	Rye 00 Acres	Barley 00 Acres	Total sown 00 Acres	Per Cent of Farm Land in Crops
Average						
1956-60	642	84	96	157	1310	74
1951-55	627	92	220	241	1370	78
1946-50	381	111	180	147	1010	56
1941-45	369	101	106	141	841	57
1936-40	302	54	na	106	866	63
1931-35	413	69	na	na	1064	77
1926-30	451	111	na	na	1060	84
1921-25	487	104	na	na	927	75
1916-20	na	na	na	na	na	na
1911-15	729	na	na	na	911	na
1906-10	235	na	na	na	403	na

na—not available

Oats are totally ill-suited for the growing conditions in the colony. Neither climate nor soil favors the growth of this grain. Nevertheless, in the early 1930's there was a great interest in oats, and in 1933 over 5,000 acres were planted. Undoubtedly this was brought about by the low wheat prices of the period and the desire of the farmers to find some crop which they could raise for a profit. Oats may be fed to livestock, or, in the event that yields are low, the fields can be used as pasture. That oat yields are usually small in the colony is attested to by the fact that in over 24 growing seasons the yield has been barely 10 bushels per acre. Corn produces equally as poorly as oats, and the average for 24 growing seasons is slightly less than 12 bushels per acre. Nevertheless, colonists have continued to grow small quantities for forage.

Alfalfa occupied over 30 per cent of all the cropland in the *partido* of Adolfo Alsina in 1947, but in the same year only 12 per cent of the cropland of Barón Hirsch was in this crop.[30] The explanation for this is that the colony has never participated in livestock production to the degree of the rest of the *partido*. Also, over wide areas of the colony the *tosca* (hardpan) layer is situated so close to the surface of the soil that it provides a poor environment for growth of the deep-rooted alfalfa plant.

Two grain sorghums, milo and kafir, have been grown with a degree of success. It is difficult to understand why these two crops have not been widely planted in the colony, or for that matter in other areas of Argentina. They are highly drought-resistant plants and adaptable to sandy soils.

Sunflowers were once grown, but with virtually no success. This oleaginous plant makes great demands on available soil moisture, and wheat grown on land previously planted in sunflowers produces poor yields. Nevertheless, it is worth while mentioning this crop, since the Jews of the JCA colonies in Entre Ríos were the first to introduce it to Argentina.[31] Today it is grown in large quantities throughout the Humid Pampa.

The small size of the average farm within the colony restricted the livestock industry before 1945. Yet despite this, the colonists endeavored to raise cattle from the time the colony was founded. They were encouraged in their efforts by the JCA, which furnished them with the nucleus of a herd of either Shorthorn, Hereford, or Angus cattle when the farms were assigned. There is ample evidence that the colonists actually did try to develop their herds to commercial importance during periods when beef prices were higher than wheat. Though figures are not available for the years during World War I, a period which favored livestock production, the immediate postwar period in the colony was characterized by larger herds than normal (Table 3). The same can be said for 1941-46, which covered most of World War II, another period when livestock production was more profitable than wheat.

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[30] *Partido* statistics taken from Argentina, Ministerio de Agricultura, *Censo nacional agropecuario de 1947*.

[31] Juan L. Tenembaum, *Aporte de la Colonización Judía al Progreso del Agro Argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1952), p. 7.

The establishment of good pastures proved to be very difficult throughout the entire region where the colony is situated. At the turn of the century a drought-resistant natural grassland, known as *pasto duro* (hard pasture) because of the hard narrow leaves on the grass, still dominated. These natural pastures dried up for three to four months in the hot summer and again in the dry winter and had only a limited cattle-carrying capacity. Grasses such as rye grass and brome grass were substituted, thereby creating what has come to be called the *pasto tierno* (tender pasture). However, even these pastures frequently fail after prolonged dry periods.

TABLE 3
Livestock, Dairy, Power, and Transportation

	Cattle	Milk 000 Gallons	Per Cent of Milk Processed to Cheese	Horses	Tractors	Autos
Average						
1956-60	51,800	1,010	81	5,126	61	87
1951-55	25,300	1,180	78	6,644	22	36
1946-50	20,600	1,320	88	7,430	4	23
1941-45	14,200	951	78	7,627	2	23
1936-40	9,200	718	74	6,722	2	18
1931-35	6,120	398	36	7,810	2	26
1926-30	6,484	297	17	8,311	3	28
1921-25	8,758	289	16	7,312	na	na
1916-20	na	na	na	na	na	na
1911-15	2,260	na	na	7,158	na	na
1906-10	1,463	na	na	3,342	na	na

na—not available

One of the most disastrous years for the livestock in the colony was 1921, which was one of prolonged autumn drought. The pastures were burned a dull brown, causing the colonists to remember the year as *El Año Negro* (the Black Year). Starvation and dust strangulation took a heavy toll of cattle. The colonists were forced to sell off many head at extremely low prices, since the drought had created a buyer's market in the region.

In the 1930's the *partido* of Adolfo Alsina became one of the centers of a specialized form of cattle production which developed in Argentina. This was the system that became known as *invernadero,* meaning literally "wintering," but having little to do with the season of the year. Under the system large numbers of cattle are purchased from the breeding region to the east when they are 12 to 18 months old, and weigh 770 to 880 pounds. They are then put out to graze on natural pasture or alfalfa during the summer, and moved to oats, rye, or barley pasture during the winter. They are fattened for approximately 12 months and when they weigh roughly 1,000 pounds, are shipped to market.[32] In some years, if the beef prices are extremely high in relation to wheat prices, cattle may actually be shifted onto the maturing wheat fields.

The system of *invernadero* was originated by large-scale landowners and adapts most efficiently to estates of over 10,000 acres. However, some of the Jewish farmers fattened a few head of cattle, though rarely more than 50 head on an average-sized farm. Assuming that the colony's pastures had a carrying capacity of one head of cattle for every three acres, a very generous estimate, with 50 head of cattle on his farm a colonist would have to devote over 40 per cent of his land to pasture.

For lack of figures, it is impossible to state what percentage of the colonists' total income was derived from livestock before 1938. It is doubtful if it was very large during most years. However, there were periods when the wheat prices were so depressed, or the harvest so small, that the few head of livestock marketed provided the major source of income for the year. For example, in 1942 the wheat harvest failed and the marketing of beef cattle constituted 43 per cent of the income of the average colonist.

Dairying for local consumption began when the colony was established, but it was not until 1931 that any effort was made to commercialize it. At that time the JCA lent support to the construction of a cheese factory. This factory was organized as a cooperative and assumed the name *La Cooperativa de Tamberos Barón Hirsch* (Dairymen's Cooperative of Barón Hirsch).

One of the reasons the JCA supported commercial dairying was because it was less seasonal an occupation than wheat farming, keeping the colonists busy throughout the year. Some people said that if the JCA supported an occupation which kept the colonists busy all year there would be less difficulty between the JCA and the colonists. As grain farmers, many were wont to spend excessively long periods of time in Rivera's public houses during the slack season, complaining about real or imaginary grievances perpetrated against them by the Association, the government, or some other group or individual.

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[32] Horacio C. E. Gilberti, "Cria de Animales," *La Argentina: Suma de Geografía*, IV (1959), 321-25.

Whatever the motive, the industry flourished, as can be seen from the figures in Table 3. The cooperative introduced the *Holando Argentino,* a mixed breed of several western European dairy cattle, with the markings of the Holstein. Despite the introduction of this milk cow, the majority of the colonists continued to derive most of their milk from cows ordinarily associated with beef production, in particular the Shorthorn.

One of the major handicaps in dairying in the colony was the distance to the processing plants. The unavailability of trucks and the poor roads meant that only those colonists who lived within a short distance of the cheese plant in Rivera could make daily deliveries with their horses and wagons. This problem was partially resolved through the creation of a network of branch cheese plants at diverse points within the colony. One was established in Delfín Huergo in 1942, another in the Lapin group in 1944, a third in Barón Guinzburg in 1946, and a fourth in Tres Lagunas in 1949.

Dairying came to contribute a large share of the total income of the colonists. Just as in the case of marketing beef cattle, its importance grew during periods of depressed wheat prices or poor wheat harvests. Without this industry, economic conditions in the colony would have been considerably worse.

For years the Jews of Barón Hirsch have been the major dairymen of the *partido.* In 1947, the only year when comparable figures are available, over 65 per cent of all the milk produced in the *partido* originated from the colony.[33] For most years, over 80 per cent of the milk produced in the colony has been used for processing cheese, generally hard Parmesan types which have always enjoyed great popularity in Argentina. The quality of the cheese of Barón Hirsch is fair, and there has always been a ready market for it in Bahía Blanca and other communities in the region.

The amount of beef and dairy cattle the colonists could graze on their limited pastures has been restricted also by the fact that each farmer has had to maintain a herd of horses. The horse has been an indispensable source of power for pulling farm equipment, especially before 1945. Most colonists had a minimum of ten animals, often many more. For those who had no experience with horses it was a matter of either learning how to manage them or giving up farming. All stages of crop production required their power, and it was not uncommon to see as many as ten or more horses harnessed together and pulling a header during the time of the wheat harvest. The colonists became adept at riding, and fully earned the name that was occasionally applied to them, *Los Gauchos Judíos de la Pampa* (Jewish Gauchos of the Pampa).

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[33] *Partido* statistics taken from *Censo nacional agropecuario de 1947.*

Sheep-grazing never has contributed very much to the economy of the colony, since it is much more profitable to use the pasture available for cattle grazing. During World War II, when the colonists explored all possible avenues to earn an income, the small sheep herds were enlarged considerably. In 1943 there were 8,200 head of sheep within the colony. Once economic conditions returned to normal the herds fell to their usual size—between 2,500 and 3,500 head.

Hogs have rarely been raised, mainly because of the Jewish proscription against the consumption of pork. However, the religious convictions of many of the colonists gradually became so weak that there were many who would have undertaken raising hogs had there been a profit in it. Corn does not grow well in the region, and there is little else to feed them; the dairy cooperative has raised a few on the whey from the milk which it processes into cheese. Most of these hogs have been marketed outside of the colony.

The JCA has always been an avid supporter of the cooperative movement, which was just being firmly established in the rural districts of the United States and western Europe at the time the Association was establishing its colonies in Argentina. One of the greatest contributions it made to Argentine agriculture was the sponsoring of the first agricultural marketing cooperative in the nation; this was founded in 1900 in the colony of Lucienville in Entre Ríos province.[34]

By 1910 the Jews of Barón Hirsch had established their own cooperative, *La Sociedad Cooperativa Agrícola Ltda. Barón Hirsch* (Barón Hirsch Agricultural Cooperative Society, Limited), with substantially the same statutes as the Lucienville cooperative. At its peak it had a membership of 300, but due to the chaotic agricultural situation in Argentina following the end of World War I and the inexperience of its administrators in financial affairs and of its members in agriculture, it had to close in 1920. So many members had

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34. Tenembaum, p. 9.

defaulted on loans that it no longer had sufficient capital to continue operation.

A second attempt to establish a cooperative was made in 1922. This new organization, *Granjeros Unidos* (Grain Growers United), had an initial membership of only 70 colonists, the result of a general lack of confidence in the cooperative movement within the colony. However, with the experience acquired from the failure of the earlier cooperative, and a more businesslike approach to the extension of loans to members, *Granjeros Unidos* soon became firmly established. In 1945 it had a membership of 384—377 Jews and 7 Gentiles.

The cooperative assumed the responsibility of marketing the colonists' grain and cattle as well as the operation of the cooperative store, which came to have the widest selection of merchandise and food of any store within the colony. From its founding *Granjeros Unidos* contributed to the cultural as well as the economic life of the colony. It supported the colony hospital and permitted the use of its building in Rivera for movies and social affairs.

Cooperativism became such an established movement within the colony that by 1946 there were five cooperatives. Aside from the agricultural cooperative and the dairy cooperative previously mentioned, Rivera's power plant was operated as a cooperative, a cooperative was established to manage reserve pasture ceded to it by the Association, and a small cooperative was created to butcher and market meat within the colony.

3. THE COLONY SINCE 1945

The decision to begin a discussion of the contemporary character of the colony with the year 1945 has been based mainly on the fact that since that date no immigrant has been installed in the colony. However, the date also has other advantages as a logical turning point in the development of Barón Hirsch. The economy of Argentina began to change radically after the end of World War II. Of even greater importance to the future of the colony was the drastic change in the Jewish Colonization Association policy toward the reserves of land it held there. Beginning in 1945 it turned over land to a newly established cooperative which was charged with the responsibility of controlling its use as pasture. Figure 2 illustrates this abrupt disposal of property.

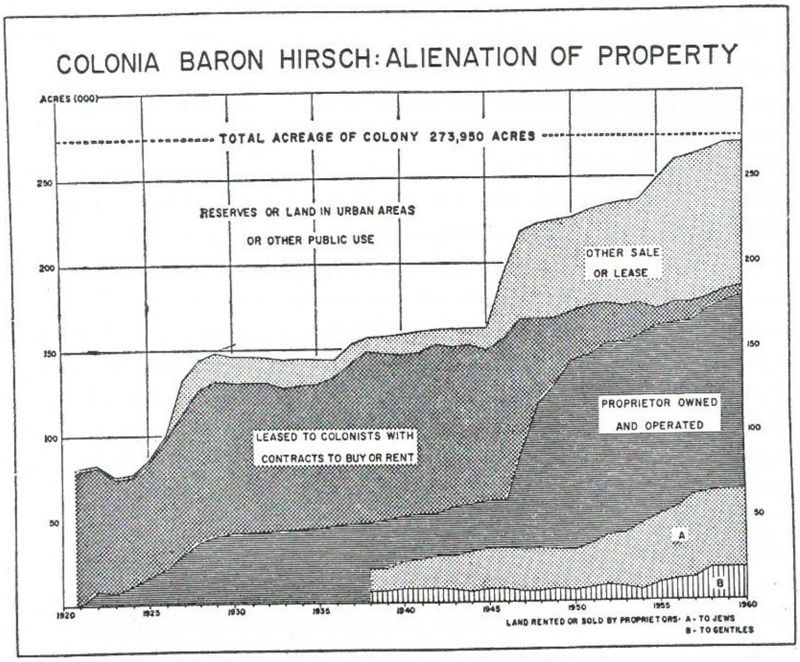
Upon the conclusion of World War II, the German extermination of such a large percentage of Europe's Jews and the desire of so many of those who remained to move to Palestine caused the JCA to reevaluate its philosophy toward colonization in Argentina. A decision was made to direct a greater share of its efforts to develop agriculture in what was soon to become Israel. Even before it reached this decision the JCA had a heavy involvement in Palestine, as it had been operating the colonies of Baron Edmund Rothschild since 1899.

The Association has continued to maintain its offices in Buenos Aires, though it functions now mainly in a "caretaker" capacity, collecting payments on mortgages and loans which a diminishing number of colonists still have outstanding. Occasionally it reassigns farms abandoned before colonists have title to them. The recipients of these farms are usually children of colonists. In 1961 there was talk of establishing a group of refugee Syrian Jews on the land in one of the colonies; however, the group chose to emigrate to Israel instead.

POPULATION

When the JCA released the reserves of Barón Hirsch to the cooperative it was hoped that this would arrest the decline in the Jewish population of the colony by improving the agricultural economy. However, the population continued to diminish in the most prolonged descent in the history of the colony. Actually this long descent began in 1942, when the Jewish population of Barón Hirsch was 3,711. With yearly declines, by 1945 it had reached 2,786 and in 1960 it dropped to 1,603. Correspondence with residents of the colony has revealed that severe droughts in 1961 and 1962 have intensified the exodus of Jewish residents, but figures are not available to the author. The reasons for this long and rapid decline are numerous.

FIGURE 2



Many of the German Jews who were installed shortly before, or during World War II did not remain. The majority had been members of the German middle class, living in the larger cities of that nation. On arrival in Barón Hirsch they were completely unprepared for the shock of living in the provincial rural atmosphere of the remote outer Pampa. Furthermore, they had little in common with the older Jewish residents of the colony, who had either become intensely Argentine or maintained their eastern European Jewish traditions.

It was not uncommon for animosity to develop between the recently arrived German Jews and the established residents of the colonies, though little was experienced in Colonia Barón Hirsch as compared with some of the other JCA colonies. To a degree this animosity was based on economics, since the German Jews were settled on land which some of the colonists felt should have been awarded to their children. However, in part it emanated from a clash of personalities between the more sophisticated urban Germans and the provincial or traditional older residents of the colony. One former colonist of another JCA colony told the author that "they were as arrogant as the Nazis they were fleeing from."

Over the years a number of German Jewish families despaired of ever adjusting to social and economic conditions in the colony and moved to Buenos Aires or one of the other large cities of Argentina. Since World War II some have received indemnities from the German government for loss of property during the Nazi regime. This indemnification, which was a source of envy among some of the other residents of the colony, greatly increased their mobility.

The long-established migration of the children of colonists to the city also aggravated the decline in population since 1945. These young people left because they saw little hope of ever acquiring land in the colony or felt that there was a greater future elsewhere. Such an attitude has been quite common among many rural Argentine youth and cannot be attributed solely to rural Jewish youth. Argentina has sustained one of the largest rural-urban migrations of any nation in the world during this century, a migration which intensified after World War II.

In 1946 Juan Perón became the President of Argentina. After he assumed office he initiated a plan, wisely conceived but poorly implemented, to break Argentine dependency on imported industrial products. Much of the money to finance this ambitious program was obtained by the government's assumption of market controls over the nation's agricultural production. In this way it was able to establish both the sale and purchase price for the nation's grain and beef. A large source of revenue for industrialization was realized from the profits the government made by paying Argentine farmers reduced prices for their agricultural products and selling them abroad at high prices. Unfortunately for the farmers of the nation, prices were set so low that their profits were severely cut. They began rapidly to lose their agricultural laborers because they were not able to pay wages comparable to those paid in the expanding tariff-protected industries in the cities. To compensate for the loss of laborers some began to mechanize, though this proved difficult because farm equipment was expensive and difficult to obtain. Others, faced with low prices for their farm products, lack of labor, and the high cost of mechanization, curtailed agricultural production. As a result, grain and beef production declined so rapidly that in 1955, just before President Perón was deposed by a revolution, the government had to take measures to curtail domestic meat consumption in order to meet foreign-trade agreements.

Since the fall of Perón subsequent Argentine governments have had little success in trying to correct the economic problems which arose during his administration. Although the government no longer controls the purchase and sale of agricultural products, Argentine agriculture still remains in a weak economic position.

Nor should it be difficult to understand why Jewish young people abandon the land more rapidly than the average Argentine youth. First, their parents often have no great attachment to the land, and many do little to encourage their children to stay. Most parents have relatives who have achieved some degree of material success in the cities of Argentina or the United States, and they contrast their own arduous life on their unremunerative farms with the less strenuous and more profitable occupations of these urban relatives. Though fate trapped them into being farmers, their aspirations for their sons are usually for success in urban occupations and for their daughters to marry Jewish youths who have gained success in the city. They frequently make great sacrifices to help in the attaining of these goals and are often abetted by their more affluent urban relatives who will take the children into their businesses.

Furthermore, it is a traditional aspiration of eastern European Jews, no matter where they have dispersed, to put great emphasis upon education for their children. The author remembers the admonition of his own grandmother, who left Lithuania as a child. She said, "Work hard in school, because they can take everything else away from you, but they cannot take your education." Parents frequently send their children away to the cities so that they can receive a better secondary education and eventually be able to enroll in one of Argentina's universities. Some 22.5 per cent of the Argentine Jewish youth of college age are enrolled in universities, while the average for the nation is 7.7 per cent.[1] Once colony children arrive in the cities they become accustomed to urban life, and even if they had intended to return to the colony when they left few do so after they graduate.

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[1] Irving L. Horowitz, "The Jewish Community of Buenos Aires," *Jewish Social Studies,* XXIV (October, 1962), 207.

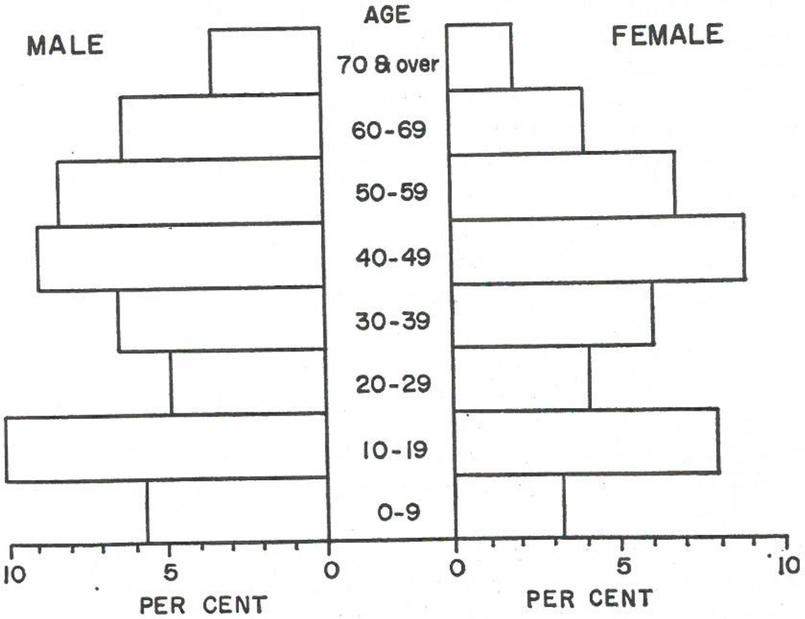
A special census was taken in the colony in 1958 of the 332 colonists who still owned farms. These farmers had a total of 857 children, of whom 571 were 20 years of age or older. Of these 571 children, 315 (55 per cent) were living outside the colony. Among the 315 who were living outside the colony, 207 (66 per cent) were living in Buenos Aires.

The census also classified the occupations of the children living outside the colony. The largest group was composed of housewives, but if we exclude this group we find that among those gainfully employed 34 per cent were in commerce, 25 per cent were in office work or employed in industry, 12 per cent were students, 4 per cent were in the professions, and 16 per cent had occupations which were not known. The most significant figure has been reserved until the last. Only 9 per cent of the children were engaged in agriculture.

The exodus from the colony also includes a large number of the aged Jewish residents of Barón Hirsch. Many of these people, once they have reached an age where they no longer have the stamina or the willingness to continue farming, leave the farm to a son or son-in-law, or sell or rent it if they have no children who wish to farm. The majority have no desire to remain within the colony since there are few social diversions to occupy the retired or semiretired. Instead, they move to the city to join their children who have settled there, or to live among relatives and friends. A few older people and some of the youth have migrated to Israel or have returned to Europe, but their numbers are small. Buenos Aires has become the home of so many Jews who once resided in the colony that they have formed a society, *Asociación de Residentes Rivereñas* (Association of Rivera Residents).

Since 1945 the Gentile population of the colony has grown rapidly. Figure 1 shows only the fluctuation in the Jewish population, and for many years the Association made no effort to enumerate the Gentiles in the colony. Yet even in the early days, as was previously mentioned, there were many who worked for the Jewish colonists as farm laborers, or were employed in or owned businesses in the town of Rivera. In recent years the Gentile population has risen because of the growing tendency to sell or rent land to Gentiles and the rising importance of Rivera as a rail junction. Lines now converge on the town from five directions. As a result a large number of Gentile railroad workers reside there. Whereas the Jewish population in the colony has been falling, the Gentile population has been rising. The JCA reports that in 1960, out of a total population of 4,938, 3,335 (67 per cent) were Gentiles.

FIGURE 3



COLONIA BARON HIRSCH

AGE AND SEX PYRAMID

1958

BASED ON 1057 JEWS

The age-sex distribution among the Jewish residents of the colony is a direct reflection of the effects of migration. It can be seen from Figure 3 that the age-group of 10 years and under is quite small, a fact which may be explained by the paucity of people in the most fertile age-group of 20—29 years of age. Members of this latter group have been among the first to leave the colony in recent years. Yet this rate of departure evidently has not always been so high, since one can see that the 10—19-year-old group is disproportionately high. No external or internal situation has ever arisen in the colony to increase the birth rate other than the fact that there were more people in the fertile age-groups 10 to 20 years ago, and their issue swells the 10—20-year-old group today.

The majority of Jews of Barón Hirsch are between 30 and 50 years of age, whereas ordinarily the Argentine rural population is more youthful. Again, the explanation lies in the increased mobility of the younger people, who since 1945 have left the colony in far greater numbers than any other group. Today the majority of colonists live with their young children or with one remaining adult child who will eventually take over the farm. In some cases this child is married, with children. The median age of the average farm owner is between 40 and 49 years of age, though 27 per cent are over 60 years of age.

The sex composition of the Jewish population also shows a rather unusual character because, though large sex ratios are certainly not uncommon in rural Argentina, the sex ratio of Colonia Barón Hirsch is extremely high. In the 1958 private census it was 136, that is, 136 males for every 100 females. It would seem reasonable to find the answer for this high ratio in the character of the immigration to the colony. The sex ratio among immigrants coming to Argentina has always been high. However, the policy of the JCA to settle only married couples on the land has meant that the sex ratio has been quite low among those who have recently arrived.

We must look to the emigration from the colony, not the immigration, if we are to find the answer for the high sex ratio. The women of the colony in all adult age-groups are more mobile than the males. The young girls flock to the cities where they can find a job and enjoy the greater freedom from parental supervision, which is much more conservative in the colony than in the city. Few like the idea of contracting marriage with a farmer and suffering the isolation of rural life. In some cases the parents will encourage their daughters to leave in the hopes of making a better marriage in the city. In 1958 the number of males for every 100 females was 142 in the 20—29-year-old group and 144 in the 30—39-year-old group. The advanced age groups (60 to 69 years of age and 70 years and over) have sex ratios of 157 and 190, respectively. This is due to the fact that widows will move to the city to live with their children or relatives more willingly than widowers, who sometimes prefer to stay on the land or in the village of Rivera in order to help their children.

Social Institutions

The rural social institutions, so assiduously developed at the time the first Jews settled in their farm villages, have long since disappeared, victims of the isolation of the farmers from each other after their dispersal onto the land. Even the complex road network of the colony (See Map 3) cannot prevent this isolation. These roads are poor, and the number of Jewish farmers who own automobiles or trucks is small, resulting in a restriction of their mobility. It must be said, in all fairness to the Argentine government, that road paving is extremely difficult on the Pampa, since wind-deposited sand and silt have covered all gravel and stone deposits which could be used as sources of road metal. Even the two provincial highways that cross the colony from east to west and north to south are wide, rutted sand roads, deeply incised into the loess plain they cross.

Today the life of the Jewish farmer differs little from that of his Gentile neighbors. Some Jews are by now the product of three generations of Argentine rural life. In that period of unremitting struggle for economic survival, for want of any experience in farming in the countries they emigrated from and lack of much technical guidance from the JCA once they arrived, the Jewish farmers came to emulate the ways of those among whom they settled. The clothes they wear are the same, and the homes they live in are usually the typical adobe brick, zinc-roofed houses which have been a part of the Argentine landscape for decades. No power lines are found outside the village of Rivera, and the majority of farmers who have electrified their homes have done so with wind chargers which can generate sufficient current to operate only a few lights and a radio; there are few farmers with enough money to invest in gas or diesel generators. No farmers have telephones; the only phones in the colony are in Rivera, where the cooperative *Granjeros Unidos* maintains a small system that connects with the national system.

Most of the Jewish farmers who live in the country simply live too far away from town to participate in the limited social life which exists there. They are able to come to town only infrequently, usually to replenish exhausted supplies they are not able to produce on their farms. Though most have radios, their world view is limited. Those who endeavor to follow current events through the newspapers find deliveries sporadic, and copies of the Buenos Aires or Bahía Blanca dailies reach them days late. There are actually a few farmers who have never been to Bahía Blanca, though it lies only 105 miles to the south, and is connected with the colony by several daily trains which stop in Rivera. Despite the similarities, one important difference separates the Jewish from the Gentile farmer of the colony. The Jewish farmer who remains on the land is the remnant of a much larger group which formerly lived there, but whose members moved to Rivera or to another Argentine city. Whereas few Gentile farmers in the colony have any doubts in their minds as to their choice of occupation, there must be many Jewish colonists who constantly are questioning their decision to continue farming. There are probably very few among these Jewish farmers who do not have at least one relative who has achieved material success in the city, and who they feel would not refuse them help if they chose to seek their fortunes in the city. With this knowledge, it seems amazing that so many Jews have chosen to stay.

As more farmers abandon their land, the distance between farms becomes greater, thus increasing the farmers' isolation. Perhaps the only continuous contact in the colony's rural area is among the children who attend the provincial rural schools scattered among the various groups. These schools offer six grades of education but are usually inferior to the schools in Rivera. Because of the distance that some children live from the schools attendance is poor.

Life in rural Barón Hirsch would be much more lonely but for the strong cohesive force generated by most of the colonists' active participation in *Granjeros Unidos,* the colony cooperative. Much can be said in favor of this cooperative, whose leaders have wisely involved all the members in shaping its destiny. Almost without exception the farmers in the colony follow its progress with avid interest. In turn, the cooperative has become the major medium for disseminating agricultural information and services. Unfortunately, a lack of money has prevented the development of a social program, which, as the leadership is aware, is extremely important if the colony's rural residents are to maintain any unity.

Religion as a cohesive force may have played the decisive role in unifying the rural areas of the United States in the past, but it never was able to do so in Colonia Barón Hirsch. There is little interest in religion among most of the farmers who remain in the country. Perhaps, out of custom, a number attend the important holy days in the synagogue of Rivera, but few consciously permit religion to be part of their daily lives.

There is one exception to this general apathy on the part of the rural Jews to maintain much social contact. This is the case of Colonia Lapin, a group located in the southeastern part of the colony. Forty families from the drought-stricken colony of Narcisse Leven to the west were settled here in 1919. Because of the great distance which separated this group from Rivera, the colonists created their own social club, *Centro Cultural de Lapin* (Cultural Center of Lapin). Here they established a library, held religious services, conducted literary discussions, and presented plays and movies. Today the population of Lapin is much reduced from earlier days, and in 1960 the club had a membership of only 60. However, in 1946 they built a new clubhouse, and social activities are still held there. At approximately the same time as they built the new clubhouse they were able to induce the colony cooperative to open a branch in the group, the only branch the cooperative operates. Lapin stands as an example of what could have developed in some of the other groups had there been more initiative on the part of the residents to try to overcome the obstacles.

Three other groups still maintain small rural clubs. These groups are Philippson, Montefiore, and Veneziani. Philippson is the largest, with a membership of 36, though 20 are Gentiles. Montefiore has 24 members, of whom 6 are Gentiles. Veneziani has 17 members, all Jewish. Delfín Huergo, the village on the southern border of the colony along the railroad, has a club with a membership of 58, with 25 Gentiles. All the clubs in the groups maintain libraries of Spanish and Yiddish books. Veneziani, because so many German Jews settled within the group, maintains a collection of German books as well. However, yearly the colony administrator notes in his annual report that in the past year no social activities developed in any of the clubs, a fact that is all too apparent when one visits them and notes their neglected appearance.

While the rural life of the colony is typified by isolation and disunity, the social life in the village is better developed. Actually the population of Rivera has been quite stable for the past twenty years, and although the number of Jews living there has dropped, the decline has been offset by an influx of Gentiles. In 1960 the population of the town was 2,505—685 Jews and 1,820 Gentiles.

The physical appearance of Rivera has shown little change over the years. Coming from Buenos Aires or Bahía Blanca, where there are many modern buildings, one is struck by the bleak austerity of the town. It is as if one were suddenly transported back in time to the period of frontier villages in western Kansas during the late nineteenth century. Everything seems strangely familiar, until one realizes that he has seen it all in cowboy films or on television. Yet the appearance of Rivera differs little from any town of comparable size in the region.

The buildings are usually old, and the universal building material seems to be baked red adobe brick. Almost all the buildings are single-storied. The commercial establishments are located along one block of a single street. The most imposing structure is the synagogue, which is made of the same red brick as most of the other buildings in the town. It is the tallest and the most massive structure in Rivera and truly can be thought to stand as a symbol of the piety of a past generation.

All the streets in the town are unpaved, and the wheels of horse carts, buggies, and autos have dug deep ruts in their sand base. Residents state that the only time the government does anything to improve them is at the times of elections. When the wind blows and on the occasions when herds of cattle and horses are driven along the streets of the town, a thick cloud of dust arises. There is no public water supply or sewage disposal. The majority of homes receive their water from windmill-powered pumps in their courtyard or back yard.

With the growing influence of Gentiles within the colony, Jewish organizations have accepted Gentile members. For example, the leading club of the town for many years has been the *Centro Cultural Israelita* (Jewish Cultural Center). It still sponsors most of the cultural activities in Rivera. Its library is the largest in the whole region, having 7,780 volumes in Spanish, Yiddish, Hebrew, German, and several other languages. In 1960 the *Centro* had a total membership of 615, with 95 Gentiles. In the same year the colony cooperative had a membership of 360 Jews and 67 Gentiles.

The major interest of the youth of Rivera no longer is as intellectual as it was formerly. Theaters and literary and political discussion groups have given way to sports clubs. These clubs were established by Gentiles but have large Jewish memberships. In 1960 the total membership of the three sports clubs was 1,202, of whom 352 were Jews. Popular sports are soccer, basketball, tennis, cycle racing, and *bocha.* The latter sport, which bears a close resemblance to lawn bowling, is extremely popular in rural Argentina. Chess continues to be a popular pastime among both Gentiles and Jews.

Occasionally the JCA or a Jewish organization from Buenos Aires sponsors entertainers or lecturers to come to Rivera. At other times travelling theatrical groups will make an appearance, as for example the company that came from Bahía Blanca to present a modern Argentine comedy at the time the author was living there. Normally the possibilities for amusement are limited. Movies are presented on week ends, but the films are often old and of indifferent quality. Perhaps the most regularly attended events are the daily arrivals and departures of the Buenos Aires trains; at these times the station platform is crowded with people who come to welcome or take leave of friends.

Rivera is justly proud of its medical facilities since they are much better than those usually found in an Argentine village of comparable size. There are four doctors, one dentist, and one registered pharmacist. Moreover, the town still maintains its hospital, which serves the entire colony. Rivera also has a veterinarian; he is one of the few children of Barón Hirsch who went to the city for his education and returned.

The secular education of the children of Rivera is now entirely under the jurisdiction of the provincial and the national governments. There are two grade schools, which offer instruction through the sixth grade. In addition, in 1951, a secondary school was opened in Rivera offering an additional four years of education. The creation of this secondary school filled an important need in the educational program of the town, since prior to its creation parents who had educational aspirations for their children had to send them to another city, usually Buenos Aires. A small agricultural school was established in Rivera during the Perón administration. However, it is poorly equipped and never has enjoyed a great success. It has fewer than fifty pupils, none of them Jewish.

The religious interest on the part of the Jews of Rivera has disappeared almost completely. For many years the synagogue has had no rabbi. At the time of the religious holidays there is enough interest to convoke a minyan, at which an old Orthodox Jew officiates. The rest of the year religion is not a significant force. How services will be held once the few remaining older people have gone is a moot point. It is doubtful that the young religious seminary in Buenos Aires will be able to supply a rabbi since it will find it difficult to meet the demand for rabbis in the city.

The only Jewish religious education in Colonia Barón Hirsch is imparted by one of the older Jews, who offers two courses. In 1960 these two courses had a total enrollment of 62 students. The curriculum is primarily the study of Yiddish, and in many ways the school is reminiscent of the primitive heders which were the first religious schools in the colony. The burial society *Hevra Kaddisha* had a membership of 448 in 1960. The synagogue had a membership of only 80 the same year.

With the increase in the Gentile population two churches have been established in Rivera—a Catholic congregation numbering 200 members and a Protestant church having 60 members.

It would be wrong to assume that because religious interest has disappeared the Jews of Barón Hirsch have completely assimilated with the Gentiles of the area. Apostasy is a rarity in the community, despite the presence of the Catholic and the Protestant church. Jews will send their children to Buenos Aires in the hope that they will marry in the faith. Frequently those who do intermarry and remain in the colony raise their children with a Jewish identity. This is especially true if the male parent is Jewish. Membership in a synagogue, or often merely the statement that one is a Jew is enough to maintain an identity. Two of the greatest cohesive forces are the Yiddish language and the State of Israel. In the United States Yiddish is seldom spoken by even the second generation American Jews, but in the absence of religion the Jews of Barón Hirsch attach great importance to speaking Yiddish as a means of maintaining Jewish identity. Almost all the Jews of the colony continue to speak it, though by now it is second in importance to Spanish. Most of the Jews of the colony show great interest in the rebirth of Israel, and many of them have made disproportionately large contributions to its support, considering their modest circumstances.

AGRICULTURE

As already stated, the pattern of rural settlement gradually evolved from one of rural villages to one of dispersed settlement. However, the dispersed pattern is gradually being challenged as the dominant pattern of rural settlement among the Jews of the colony. Since 1945 there has been an increasing tendency for the Jewish farmers to engage in what has come to be called sidewalk farming on the Great Plains of the United States.

Sidewalk farming can be defined as the active exploitation of a farm while living in a village nearby. In 1960, 64 (22 per cent) of the Jewish farmers were living in Rivera and could be thought of as being true sidewalk farmers. The reasons for such a movement to Rivera are not difficult to ascertain. If the farmers have children they are attracted because of the better schools. There is a more active social life, and stores are readily available. Their homes can be fully electrified and can be equipped with amenities of which the person living in the country could only dream. Furthermore, if he limits his exploitation to livestock and grain production, the farm does not require his daily attention. Also, many farmers open businesses or seek employment in Rivera. In 1958, 17 sidewalk farmers were engaged in business there. Undoubtedly more Jewish farmers would choose this way of life if their land were closer to Rivera or they could afford automobiles to reach their farms easily.

The size of the Jewish farms has increased greatly since 1945. This has been made possible by the sale or rental of land by the many Jewish farmers who have left the colony to those who have remained. By 1945, 56 colonists had sold 22,200 acres of land to Jews, and 6 colonists had sold 2,120 acres to Gentiles. By 1960, a total of 105 colonists had sold 39,500 acres to Jews, and 24 colonists had sold 10,800 acres to Gentiles. In addition, Jews rented 1,890 acres to their coreligionists in 1945, but by 1960 this had risen to 7,150 acres. For the same period, property rented to Gentiles decreased from 6,175 acres to 3,940 acres. Figures are unavailable to the author for the years 1961 and 1962, but assuredly these two drought years have enhanced the sale or rental of property considerably.

As those who remain purchase or rent land from those who cease to farm, their farms are gradually achieving a more realistic size considering the physical limitations of the region. The private census of 1958 is the most accurate means of establishing the distribution of farm sizes among the Jewish farmers. In that year 37 per cent of the farms continued to be between 200 and 400 acres. However, 33 per cent were from 400 to 600 acres, 16 per cent from 600 to 800 acres, and 4 per cent from 800 to 1,000 acres. Ten per cent of the farmers had farms over 1,000 acres, and a few Jewish farmers had even managed to acquire large tracts outside of the colony. The largest landowner in the colony has truly graduated to the ranks of Argentina's large-scale landowning class. In 1958 he owned slightly less than 15,000 acres both within and outside the colony. In addition to this man, three other Jewish farmers held farms of more than 6,000 acres.

Despite the rapid increase in the size of some of the colony's farms, the average size is well below the average for the *partido,* or for a county of comparable physical environment in the United States. In 1958 the median farm in Colonia Barón Hirsch was 610 acres, in the *partido* of Adolfo Alsina in 1947 it was 1,440 acres, and in Comanche County, Kansas, in 1954 the average farm was 1,170 acres.

TABLE 4

PERCENTAGE OF INCOME EARNED FROM MAJOR ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Average	Dairying	Cereals	Cattle	Other	Total	Real Income* (pesos)
1955-59	4.0	39.2	51.4	5.4	100.0	45,100
1950-54	11.1	52.7	25.8	10.4	100.0	23,400
1945-49	36.7	19.7	28.0	15.6	100.0	15,400
1940-44	27.6	20.0	23.4	29.0	100.0	11,400

*Based on consumer price index in *U. N. Statistical Yearbook,* 1961.

The small size of the typical Jewish farm in the colony is still the most important reason the average farm income is so small. Nevertheless, the situation has improved considerably since 1945 because of the release of JCA reserves to the cooperative which was formed to regulate its use as pasture.

Table 4 illustrates the rapid rise in farm income per colonist. This increase is most notable after 1950, since by that time cattle-grazing had become an important source of income in the colony. Jewish farmers expanded their herds and turned them onto the cooperative pasture. Many plowed up their own pastures and planted them to wheat. As farm income increased, its source gradually became more concentrated in livestock and cereal. In earlier periods, when wheat prices were low and livestock production not important in the colony, cheese and such miscellaneous items as wool, lambs, and eggs loomed heavier in importance. Through their ability to choose between raising cattle or growing wheat, the Jewish farmers are less subject to the constantly changing relationship of the price of the two. Thus, if the export price of beef is higher than wheat they now have the flexibility to convert to livestock production.

The release of the reserves, though they generally occupy the worst areas in the colony, has had a salutary effect on the economy of the colony. Also, the tremendous inflation within Argentina has permitted the colonists to reduce their mortgages rapidly, paying inflated pesos on mortgages contracted when the peso was harder. In 1960 there were only eleven colonists without title to their property. The majority of these were still going through their trial period before the Association would issue them title.

After World War II and the resumption of the sale of large quantities of Argentine wheat to European nations, the colonists resumed planting large acreages. Despite the huge expansion of the colony's livestock population, if prices are normal and the weather is good, the wheat crop still can earn the Jewish farmers the largest share of their income. Acreage put to wheat as a percentage of the total cropland once again reached a percentage comparable to the period 1906-10, though dependency on wheat has been greatly lessened by the recent diversification into livestock.

Because of the sandy and depleted character of the soils within the colony, which for years have sustained continuous wheat production without crop rotation or summer fallow, it is remarkable that wheat yields have been maintained. It is even more remarkable to note (Table 1) that in the period 1956-60 wheat yields per planted acre were higher than at any time in the history of the colony. Yields per harvested acre, though not showing as dramatic an increase as per planted acre, also rose from earlier periods.

Several reasons can be advanced for the increase in wheat yields. First, over the years the colonists have gradually acquired greater competence in farming under the adverse physical conditions of the region. Second, *Granjeros Unidos,* the colony cooperative, has worked diligently to find seeds which are high yielding and has disseminated information among the colonists which has been useful to them in resolving their farm problems. Most important of all, many colonists have been able to mechanize their farm operations since 1955. In this way they are better able to face the climatic variability of the region in which they live. In the early days plowing and harvesting took an excessively long period of time with the primitive equipment. In some years the weather limited the time the farmer had to work his land or harvest his crop. With modern equipment he can do the tasks of farming quickly within the short periods that the weather may permit. Recently the colonists have even resorted to airplanes to spray crops against insects and plant diseases.

Table 3 shows that the number of tractors in the colony has risen from an average of 4 in the period 1946-50 to 61 in the 1956-60 period. In 1960 there were actually 130 tractors owned by Jewish farmers. The program of mechanization transcends the introduction of tractors and includes the purchase of harrow plows, disk plows, disk drills, and even combines.

Mechanization of agriculture has been extremely difficult for the farmers of Barón Hirsch, yet the scarcity of farm laborers compels it. The colony, as all of rural Argentina, has suffered from the loss of farm laborers who continue to move into the cities to take work in the tariff-protected industries which are able to pay wages that will afford them a higher standard of living than can rural employment.

A closer look at the economics of mechanization in Argentina will convey just how deeply many of those who have mechanized must have gone into debt.[2] Argentine farm equipment is comparable in price to that produced in the United States. However, the price of farm products is less than in the United States. In May, 1962, a study was made comparing the cost of a fifty-horsepower tractor in Argentina and in the United States in terms of the quantity of wheat needed to purchase it. At that time, based on a price of 540 pesos per 100 kilos of wheat, it took 107 metric tons of wheat to buy the tractor in Argentina and 79 metric tons in the United States. If we apply the same Argentine wheat prices to other farm machinery produced in that country we find that it would take 157 metric tons to buy a 14-foot combine and 19 metric tons to buy a 5-furrow 26-inch disc plow. Comparable figures for United States farm equipment would be 115 metric tons of wheat for the combine and 14 metric tons of wheat for the plow.

The same relationship can be applied to farm equipment and beef. Here we find that the Argentine farmer is even more at a disadvantage when compared to an American farmer. The price of beef on the hoof in Argentina was 20 pesos per kilo in May, 1962. At this price it would take 29 metric tons of beef to buy the 50-horsepower tractor, where it would take only 13 metric tons of beef in America.

In the period 1956-60 the average farmer of Barón Hirsch marketed 80 metric tons of wheat per year. Even with the income he derives from the sale of livestock, the financing of mechanization can have very dangerous consequences with such a small yearly income. Some farmers, particularly those in the well-organized Group Lapin, endeavored to pool their capital and purchase equipment to be used jointly among themselves. Unfortunately, this plan failed because all the farmers needed the equipment at the same time. Gradually the colonists of Lapin, as all the farmers of the colony, had to confront their mechanization individually. Those who have fared the best have been the German Jewish farmers who received indemnities from the German government. Some of the others have received credit from the colony cooperative, but their number is small because the cooperative is short of capital. The government has also issued credits, but because of its desperate economic situation the number of farmers who have received them is also small. The majority have had to apply to private lending agencies and go deeply into debt, sometimes mortgaging their land for collateral.

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[2] The author wishes to thank Mr. Quentin R. Bates, Agricultural Attaché with the American Embassy in Argentina, and the Overseas Division of International Harvester Company for supplying him with the necessary information to complete the analysis which follows.

The biggest single change in the economy of the colony since 1945 has been the expansion of the livestock industry. Today, even in good crop years, it almost equals wheat production as the major source of income. Between 1945 and 1960 the number of cattle increased from 19,200 to 69,000 as colonists began to use reserves released by the JCA as common pasture. By 1960 the average herd in the colony was approximately 250 head per colonist, a size comparable to the average farmers' herd in the *partido* of Adolfo Alsina.

For the most part the herds are grazed on open pasture which has been seeded in grasses more succulent than the original natural vegetation of the colony. Nevertheless, despite the introduction of better grasses, the improved pastures would be considered "rough" when compared with those of the Great Plains of the United States. As is typical of most of the Pampa, milk thistle (*Silybum marianum*) and musk thistle (*Carduus nutans*) are ubiquitous noxious plants found throughout the colony, and sometimes they appear to cover a pasture to the exclusion of any other vegetation. Attempts have been made by the colonists to control these thistles as well as other weeds, and some use special equipment to cut and chop them. However, the colony as well as the whole region needs to mount a concerted drive to eradicate thistles. Today those colonists who do make an effort to destroy them are usually quickly defeated in their attempts because seeds of the noxious plants are transported onto their lands by winds that pass over neglected pastures.

The pastures of the colony can support only approximately one head of cattle for every three acres during the most favorable seasons. During the winter the pastures have low carrying capacities due to the prolonged period of frost and low temperature. Pastures frequently fail in the summer as well, since the sandy soils are edaphically dry and have low water-holding capacity. To date, the people of this dry margin of the Pampa have not been able to find a satisfactory pasture grass to withstand the droughts.

The colonists have not increased their acreage of oats, rye, barley, or alfalfa to provide pasture for their feeder cattle during the winter. They rely on the cooperative pastures and their own grass pastures. Nevertheless, oats, rye, and barley continue to be grown on the farms and are often used for winter pasture. If the conditions of the grass pastures of the colony are good by spring, the cattle are taken off the winter pasture by the middle of September, which is soon enough for the crop of oats, rye, or barley to make a harvest that the colonists can market or feed to their livestock.

The dairy industry has lost relative importance to other sources of income in the colony. In the period 1945-49 it contributed an average of 36 per cent to the total income of the colonists, yet by the period 1955-59 the percentage had fallen to 4 per cent. Most of this drop has been brought about by the increased income that the farmers earn from the sale of wheat and livestock. However, there has been a drop in the number of gallons of milk produced yearly as well.

Dairying has never been an occupation which the colonists preferred. It was accepted because it was an alternative source of income at a time when wheat prices were low and large-scale livestock production was impossible for lack of pasture. Dairying has never been mechanized in the colony, and the milk cows require constant attention every day. Milking is done in the open air, sometimes in inclement weather. Production per cow is small, since the colonists continue to milk Shorthorns and have shown little interest in following the advice of the dairy cooperative to introduce the *Holando Argentino* milk cow. Also, the colonists must make daily deliveries of milk to the cheese plants over poor roads with horse and wagon. In the past they have delegated the tedious chores associated with dairying to their hired laborers, but with the decrease in farm laborers in the colony they have had to assume direct responsibility for the work. Most are unwilling to accept the additional effort, and as a result fewer colonists engage in dairy production.

The number of horses in the colony has fallen rapidly since the farmers began to mechanize. There are actually fewer in the colony today than at any time since 1912. It is not an uncommon sight to see large herds of horses being driven to the railroad yards in Rivera, where they are purchased by meat packers or are sent out of the colony for sale in other areas. Horse meat for export has become an important secondary income for Argentina as the mechanization of agriculture makes horsepower obsolete.

It would be wrong to assume that the horse will soon be a thing of the past within the colony. There are still many farmers who have not mechanized and are entirely dependent upon horses. Their use as a means of transportation is still widespread, and any hour of the day one can expect to see saddled horses or horses and wagons in the country or on the streets of Rivera. Also, the horse and rider are still indispensable in the herding of livestock.

Despite the rapid increase in the size of the average Jewish farms, the mechanization of agriculture, and the diversification of the economy through the expansion of the livestock industry, climate continues to be the major obstacle preventing the achievement of economic stability within the colony. Between 1945 and 1962 the grain harvest was either severely hurt or completely destroyed five times. Droughts in 1961 and 1962 not only damaged the grain harvest but also dealt a crippling blow to the enlarged livestock industry. In both years thousands of head of cattle were loaded into trains and shipped to the more humid Pampa to the east, though not before many had died in the fields. To illustrate the type of adversities beyond human control that the colonists may face in a single bad year, a partial list of those encountered in 1961 is given below.[3]

1. In June eight frosts severely damaged pastures in many parts of the colony.
2. Hoof-and-mouth disease broke out among cattle in many herds despite the fact that most had been vaccinated.
3. Distemper caused the death of many horses.
4. Diseases affecting the hoofs and the eyes of cattle became widespread and proved very difficult to eradicate.
5. Three plant diseases appeared in many colonists' ripening grain.
6. Four hailstorms and torrential cloudbursts damaged grainfields on December 5th and 6th, just before the harvest.

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[3] "Rivera, Colonia Barón Guinzburg," *El Colono Cooperador,* XLV (January-February, 1962), 15.

7. On December 22, during the wheat harvest, a windstorm destroyed much unharvested wheat in many localities throughout the colony.

The impoverished Argentine government was not able to offer much help to the farmers of the drought-stricken area, which by 1962 included the greater part of the southwestern Pampa. As palliatives, freight rates on the nationalized railroads were reduced 25 per cent to permit the farmers to shift their cattle to the east, a moratorium was granted on government loans until June, 1963, and assurances were made to the farmers that they would be able to obtain seed loans in order to replant for the 1963 season.

With debts incurred through mechanization and two successive crop failures, there is widespread discouragement among the colonists of Barón Hirsch. The rural-urban migration has intensified, and today less than 1,500 Jews remain within the colony. The JCA announced in September, 1962, that token credits totaling 500,000 pesos (approximately $5,000) would be made available to the colonists. However, a spokesman for the Association reiterated that no longer did it feel it should or could continue to offer more than nominal aid to the colonists.[4]

CONCLUSION

The continued need for the JCA's support of the colonists of Barón Hirsch a half-century after its creation attests to the fact that the scheme to colonize it has largely been unsuccessful. The future of the colony was determined at the time the Association reached the decision to install the majority of colonists on 370 acres of land. Physical conditions in the colony never permitted an individual installed on such a reduced acreage to achieve economic stability. Other mistakes were made by the Association. Moreover, the colonists themselves cannot be absolved of blame for the present situation. Nor should one forget to consider the troubled history of Argentina in the twentieth century or the series of world crises which caused the constant fluctuation in the world demand for its beef and wheat. However, no factor shaped the destiny of the colony as deeply as the decision which established the size of the farms. If it were not for the fact that many of those who were installed quickly recognized the impossibility of achieving economic security there and left, the situation would have been far worse. Instead, the abandonment of many farms has permitted some of those who remained to expand their own. Though it appears callous to state it, perhaps the prolonged droughts of 1961 and 1962 will ultimately have a salubrious effect on the colony's future. Additional abandonment will permit the continued expansion of the farms of those who remain. Inevitably the time might be approaching where farms will be large enough to permit their owners to earn an adequate income despite the physical adversities inherent to farming in the region.

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[4] "Las Autoridades de Fraternidad Agraria Se Entrevistaron con el Presidente y Director General de la J.C.A.," *El Colono Cooperador,* XLVI (October, 1962), 13-14.

In the author's opinion, Colonia Barón Hirsch will fail in the realization of its namesake's dream—the establishment of a colony of middle-class Jewish farmers. To achieve middle-class status the number of Jews who can remain in the colony will have to be so small that they will find it impossible to maintain their Jewish identity for many more generations. Inevitably they will assimilate completely with the Gentiles around them. The years that Colonia Barón Hirsch will remain a Jewish colony are numbered, but the long-awaited time when economic stability is achieved by its farmers may be at hand.

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